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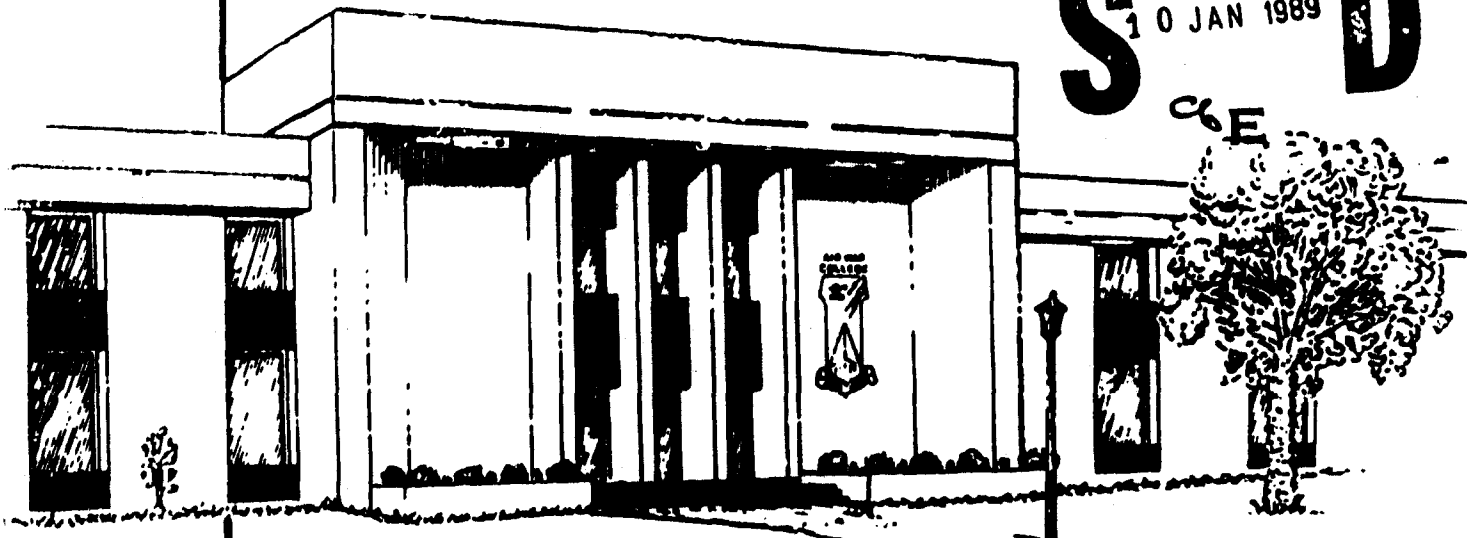
## RESEARCH REPORT

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WOMEN IN COMBAT ROLES: PAST AND FUTURE

By LIEUTENANT COLONEL MARION E. OELKE  
AND  
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MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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by

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN  
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH  
REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Mr Ted Kluz

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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# AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

**TITLE:** Women in Combat Positions: Past and Future

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Public law restricts female members of the Air Force from duty in aircraft engaged in combat missions. To implement this law, the Air Force has published a regulation which outlines combat exclusions affecting the assignment and utilization of Air Force military women. This Air War College Special Interest Item Study analyzes US law and Air Force policy trends in response to sociological forces. It also summarizes current international laws and policies governing the use of women in combat roles today. To add perspective, a thorough history of women's combat experience worldwide is presented together with a discussion of American cultural attitudes and a review of common concerns surrounding the use of women in combat roles. The study concludes with a forecast of the need for a change in Air Force policy and the prospects for a change in the law. (SLOW)



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Lieutenant Colonel Marion E. Oelke hails from New York and holds a B.S. degree magna cum laude from the State University of New York and an M.A. degree from Johns Hopkins University. Commissioned a Distinguished Graduate of the Air Force Officer Training School (OTS) in 1969, she completed intelligence training at Goodfellow AFB, TX and served as a flight commander in Germany with USAF Security Service. She then joined the faculty of National Security Agency's Cryptologic School at Fort Mead, MD. At Homestead AFB, FL she commanded the WAF Squadron and served as Executive Officer to the Base Commander; she directed the phase-out of Homestead's WAF Squadron in support of the 1975 Air Force initiative to eliminate separate squadrons for women. Next, at Lackland AFB, TX, she was an OTS flight commander and Chief, OTS Leadership and Management Department before returning overseas in 1980 as a Joint Intelligence Officer at Headquarters, US Forces, Korea. Returning to OTS, she served as Standardization/Evaluation Chief, Squadron and Group Commander, and Services Division Chief. After graduating from Air Command and Staff College she became Personnel Programs Chief for Headquarters, USAF Intelligence Service at Fort Belvoir, VA. From 1985 to 1987, she commanded a USAF Recruiting Squadron at Westover AFB, MA. Colonel Oelke is a graduate of the Air War College, Class of 1988.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	DISCLAIMER. . . . .	ii
	ABSTRACT. . . . .	iii
	BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHS. . . . .	iv
I	INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
II	AIR FORCE COMBAT EXCLUSION POLICY FOR WOMEN . .	5
	Constraints of the Law. . . . .	5
	Current Air Force Combat Exclusion Policy . .	6
	Evolution of Air Force Policy . . . . .	7
	Challenges to the Law . . . . .	16
III	IMPACT OF AIR FORCE COMBAT EXCLUSION POLICY . .	18
	Combat or Non-Combat? . . . . .	18
	Personnel Management. . . . .	19
	Wartime Readiness Implications. . . . .	25
IV	WOMEN IN COMBAT: ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST. . .	28
	Female Physiology . . . . .	30
	Technological Change. . . . .	31
	Combat Effectiveness Implications . . . . .	32
	Sociological Limits . . . . .	34
	International Military Posture. . . . .	35
	Career Progression. . . . .	36
V	WOMEN IN COMBAT:	
	AROUND THE WORLD AND THROUGH THE AGES . . . . .	37
	Women in Organized Combat:	
	From Antiquity to World War . . . . .	41
	American Women in World Wars. . . . .	47
	Women of Other Nations in World Wars. . . . .	51
	Women's Performance in Combat	
	During the World Wars . . . . .	59
	Women as Prisoners of War . . . . .	61
	Israeli Women: In or Out of Combat? . . . . .	62
	American Women in Korea and Vietnam . . . . .	65
	Women in Aviation History . . . . .	66
	American Military Women in Grenada and Libya. . . . .	73
	An International Perspective on	
	Women in Modern Combat. . . . .	75
	Observations. . . . .	85

VI	AMERICAN ATTITUDES ABOUT WOMEN IN COMBAT. . . .	87
	Congressional Debate. . . . .	87
	American Public Opinion . . . . .	93
	Special Interest Group Pressures. . . . .	97
	Women's Views . . . . .	99
	Military Men's Views. . . . .	101
VII	CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	108
	The Law: Prospects for Change. . . . .	108
	Air Force Policy: Does it Need to Change?. .	112
	LIST OF REFERENCES. . . . .	114



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Secretary of the Air Force is responsible, within the constraints of the law, for establishing and implementing policy for the utilization of women in the Air Force. Public law (Title 10, United States Code, Section 8549) restricts female members of the Air Force from duty in aircraft engaged in combat missions. To implement this law, the Air Force promulgated Air Force Regulation 35-60, Combat Exclusions for Women, which outlines combat exclusions for all Air Force military women. Both the law and the Air Force policy have been and continue to be challenged. This Air War College Special Interest Item Study looks at this policy in great depth to develop recommendations about whether the policy should be continued, modified or cancelled, and forecasts the prospects of a change in the law.

The law and the Air Force policy are both driven by traditional cultural beliefs, values and attitudes, and interpretations of the "national will;" the debate on the question of women in combat is fraught with emotion. Four decades of debates, hearings, legislation, court rulings, executive guidance and pressure from special interest groups have caused the Air Force to continually modify its policy in order to keep pace with the times. As more women have entered the force, the tendency has been to move from a

restrictive to a liberal interpretation of the intent of the law. This has culminated in a current Air Force combat exclusion policy which is described in Air Force Regulation 35-60; yet the policy must continue to evolve as new interpretations of the law are accepted. An analysis of the law, challenges to the law and the evolution of Air Force policy are presented in Chapter II.

The combat exclusion policy raises many issues which impact on force management and wartime readiness. These issues and the dilemmas which arise from them are discussed in Chapter III. The discussion points out, for example, that while the Air Force combat exclusion policy does, in fact, meet the perceived intent of the law to exclude women from intentional "direct combat" roles, it also places numerous Air Force women in harm's way in any future wars. This chapter also illuminates the challenges that the policy has created in personnel management, as well as wartime readiness implications.

It is not the purpose of this paper to resolve the "women in combat" issue. That is clearly a decision which rests with the American people and their elected representatives. However, Chapter IV presents some of the traditional arguments--female physiology, technological change, combat effectiveness implications, sociological limits, international military posture, and career progression--which are a

part of the dialogue on this issue and which explain why it is so controversial.

To better understand the myriad of questions about women's potential performance in combat, Chapter V was designed to provide an historical perspective on women in combat roles around the world. This historical review is designed to provide a basic orientation about the scope and parameters of women's experiences in combat and war around the world for those who need to acquire a better understanding of the complex dimensions of the issue. In some cases, history provides helpful precedents and insights; in other cases, the record is vague indeed. The chapter also provides a special section on women in aviation and as prisoners of war as well as a detached look at the laws of other nations governing use of women in combat roles today.

Is today's social outlook and philosophy sufficiently liberal to accommodate the utilization of American women in combat? Many feel certain that it is not, whereas many others firmly maintain that the American society is ready for this change. One thing is certain: a clear and general consensus on this issue has not yet emerged. Chapter VI reviews the debate as it is evolving today by examining some of the forums through which American opinions find expression. Opinion polls, Congressional legislation and discussion, published viewpoints of special interest groups, military men, and civilian and military women

themselves are helping shape the debate about American women as combatants.

By understanding how the Air Force policy has responded to a wide variety of influences, and through exploring a broad range of historical and sociological trends, more accurate forecasts of future trends would seem possible. Chapter VII attempts to do this, taking into account the impact of technology on the changing nature of warfare, the nature of the Air Force mission, cultural trends, and the impact of those trends on prospects for a change in the exclusion law. Taking these factors into account, this study concludes that there is little likelihood for repeal or significant modification of the combat exclusion law in the near future. Air Force policy, influenced by both internal and external forces, has kept pace with the times overall. Once it is modified in accordance with the recent February 1988 Secretary of Defense guidance, the policy should be workable for the foreseeable future. The Air Force's current stance has enabled that service to almost totally integrate women into its ranks, and there are few remaining positions which are restricted to women by virtue of the exclusion statutes of Title 10. Although these statutes will probably remain "on the books" for some time, Air Force policy will not be dramatically impacted "if" or "when" the combat exclusion provision is eliminated.

## CHAPTER II

### AIR FORCE COMBAT EXCLUSION POLICY FOR WOMEN

In recent years there has been considerable discussion of the "proper role" of American women in military service. While the armed services have been at the forefront of society in granting women equality with men, women remain legally restricted from participating in the very essence of the military role--combat. (31:70)

The utilization of women by the Air Force is governed by public law and Air Force policy; both are driven by traditional cultural beliefs, values and attitudes, and interpretations of the "national will." (31:71)

#### Constraints of the Law

Women were used in various capacities during World War II as members of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), Women's Army Corp (WAC), Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES) and Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP). They performed duty in health care, administration, communication, aviation, intelligence and parachute rigging. (79:78) After World War II, Congress passed legislation to integrate these women into regular service, but restricted them from serving in combat.

#### Women's Armed Forces Integration Act, Public Law 80-625

This Act, signed by President Truman on 12 June 1948, authorized women to serve in the Regular Air Force.

It limited the number of enlisted women to 2 percent of the total force and the number of female officers to 10 percent of the female enlisted force, limited their grade to lieutenant colonel (except for one colonel as Director of Women in the Air Force (WAF)) and restricted them from command positions. (84:2; 82:3) It also established differing minimum age requirements and dependency rules for women and men. (87:1-2) Section 307(a)(proviso) of the Act ensured that women would not be employed as combatants:

The Secretary of the Air Force shall prescribe the military authority which female persons of the Air Force may exercise, and the kind of military duty to which they may be assigned: Provided, that they shall not be assigned to duty in aircraft while such aircraft are engaged in combat missions. (91:373)

Title 10, United States Code, Section 8549

The current version of the combat exclusion law states, "Female members of the Air Force, except those designated under section 8067 of this title, or appointed with a view to designation under that section, may not be assigned to duty in aircraft engaged in combat missions." (90:585) Section 8067 pertains to officers appointed as physicians, veterinarians, nurses, dentists, judge advocates, chaplains, biomedical science officers, or medical service officers.

Current Air Force Combat Exclusion Policy

Air Force Regulation 35-60, Combat Exclusion for Women, was promulgated on 20 January 1986. Through this

regulation the Secretary of the Air Force established and implemented policy for the utilization of women that ensures Air Force compliance with the letter and intent of law. The regulation explains:

Combat exclusion policy precludes the assignment of women to the following:

- (1) Aircraft whose principal mission involves aerial combat, defined as: (a) delivery of munitions or other destructive materials against an enemy, or (b) aerial activity over hostile territory where enemy fire is expected and where risk of capture is substantial.
- (2) Duties or units where there is a high probability of exposure to hostile fire and substantial risk of capture.
- (3) Instructor or staff positions where training or experience in combat aircraft is a prerequisite. (68:1)

The Regulation specifies numerous aircraft with primary wartime missions not suitable for the assignment of women. It closes four Air Force Specialties--Combat Control, Tactical Air Command and Control, Aerial Gunner, and Pararescue and Recovery--to women, and specifies several units or unit elements not open to women. It also provides guidance for deployment and evacuation of women. Finally, the Regulation provides an extensive explanation to clarify the key elements--exposure to hostile fire and substantial risk of capture--which must both be met before exclusion is appropriate. (68:1-3)

#### Evolution of Air Force Policy

Air Force policy concerning the utilization of women has changed considerably since 1948, leading to an expanded role for women. While the law excluding women from combat

has not changed, the Air Force has steadily liberalized its policies such that the distinction between combat-related and non-combat roles for women has become blurred. A review of related issues, debates and legislation shows how Air Force policymakers responded to changing times.

#### Early Air Force Policy

General Vandenberg, the Air Force Chief of Staff when Congress passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, ". . . testified emphatically that the new Air Force, while it wanted women, had no intention of using them as pilots." (3:3) The initial, restrictive interpretation of the law by the Air Force meant ". . . that all pilot jobs should be closed to women because a pilot should be available for duty in any type of aircraft on any type of mission at any time." (3:4) Consequently, Air Force policy restricted women to traditional roles well clear of combat zones. Since that time, manpower needs associated with termination of the draft, the growing feminist movement and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) debate led to a rapidly expanding role for women in the military. (79:79)

#### Air Force Policy in the Fifties

The Air Force policy that required the involuntary discharge of women who became pregnant or became a parent was confirmed in 1951 by Executive Order 10240. (87:3) However, in 1956, the first of several subsequent laws was passed that began to increase the role of women in the



military. Public Law 845 opened the Army and Air National Guard to female medical personnel--marking the end of the all-male militia. (87:2) During this period, the Air Force exclusion policies remained stringent.

#### Air Force Policy in the Sixties

The sixties saw the beginning of the movement for equal opportunity for women; this ". . . gave new momentum to efforts to eliminate discriminatory treatment of women in the armed forces." (84:2) Most significant in that regard was legislation signed by President Johnson on 8 November 1967; Public Law 90-130 removed the 2 percent ceiling on female enlisted strength, removed the grade limitations on females, equalized promotion and retirement regulations, and opened line positions in the reserves to women. (87:4) The Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) was opened to women in 1969 by administrative action. (84:2) These actions were requested by the Department of Defense to better utilize women in an effort to relieve manpower pressures caused by the Vietnam War. (83:5) The Air Force took advantage of this change in the law to promote women to colonel and general, but women continued to be utilized in "traditional" roles only and their numbers remained less than 2 percent of the force. (82:26)

### Air Force Policy in the Seventies

The seventies witnessed a dramatic change in Air Force policy concerning women.

Two major factors led to the expansion of the role of women in the armed forces. First, after the end of the draft and the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in December 1973, the military services had difficulty in recruiting and retaining enough qualified males; thereby turning attention to recruiting women. Second, the movement for equal rights for women led to demands for equal opportunity in all fields, including national defense. (84:2)

Heated ERA debate in the early seventies addressed the role of women in the military. Before their final passage of ERA in 1972, both the House and Senate rejected any amendment to exempt women from combat and from the draft. (84:11)

Expecting ratification of the ERA and under Congressional pressure to make the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) work, the Air Force embarked on a program in 1972 to triple the number of active duty line women by 1978. In 1979, the Air Force extended this program with a plan to double the number of women by Fiscal Year 1985. As the numbers of women grew from less than 2 percent to approximately 10 percent of the force during this decade, the Air Force found it necessary to face many complex utilization questions. (87:5, 26)

Most obvious was the question of just how many women could be absorbed into the Air Force in light of the combat exclusion law.

Many policies affecting women were challenged during this period, and Air Force policymakers made several adjustments to policy in response to court decisions and impending court cases. First, pregnancy and parenthood policies were changed. In 1970, the Air Force modified the policy to allow women with minor dependents to remain on active duty. In 1971, the policy was changed to allow women to remain on active duty if their pregnancy was terminated, or to apply for reentry to active duty within 12 months if discharged for pregnancy. Then in 1975, Air Force policy was modified to allow pregnant women to remain on active duty unless they specifically requested separation for reason of pregnancy. (87:3) Second, the Air Force made a concerted effort to distribute new female accessions into nontraditional job specialties. Many of these were previously regarded as "combat-related and combat-support" jobs. Combat proximity policies were also relaxed. Most noteworthy in this regard was the announcement in 1976 that pilot and navigator positions were now open to women. Finally, Congress passed two laws that abolished inequalities in the existing law. Public Law 93-290, passed in 1974, lowered the enlistment age of women to 18--the same as that for men. Public Law 94-106, signed by President Ford in 1975 after heated debate in Congress on the combat exclusion issue, opened the service academies to women. (79:97) Also, the Supreme Court ruled in 1973, Frontiero vs Richardson (411 U.S. 677),

". . . that spouses of female members of the armed forces were to be considered dependents in the same way as spouses of male members of the armed forces." (87:4) The Air Force responded to these actions with several policy changes. In 1973, separate selection boards for female enlistment applications were eliminated; separate enlistment standards were eliminated in 1974. (87:4) Then in 1975, the Air Force eliminated WAF sections and the dual base-level administration structure; unit commanders now had the entire responsibility for all personnel in their units. (87:3) In 1976, the Air Force admitted women to the Academy.

Debate on the combat exclusion of women intensified in the late seventies as a result of a federal court case challenging the Navy's combat exclusion policy, hearings concerning the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA), and a Department of Defense proposal for legislation to repeal Title 10, U.S.C. Sections 6015 (Navy) and 8549 (Air Force). (84:8; 79:81, 98) In their frustration over the issue, Congress asked the Secretary of Defense for a definition of the term "combat."

In his reply on Feb. 14, 1978, Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles Duncan defined combat to mean "engaging an enemy or being engaged by an enemy in armed conflict"; a person to be "in combat" when in a geographic area designated as a combat/hostile fire zone by the Secretary of Defense or other specific circumstances, and a combat mission as "a mission of a unit, ship, or aircraft or task organization which has as one of its primary objectives to seek out, reconnoiter, or engage an enemy." (84:8)

In 1979 and 1980, hearings were held on the Administration's proposed legislation to repeal all statutory combat restrictions. It appears that members of Congress were concerned that such total repeal would erroneously give the impression that Congress had endorsed the idea of placing women in combat, in spite of the fact the stated purpose was to permit the Navy and Air Force Secretaries more flexibility in assigning women. This legislation did not become law. (79:98)

#### Air Force Policy in the Eighties

Intense debate on the combat exclusion of women continued into the eighties, spurred primarily by reinstatement of draft registration and pressure from powerful special interest groups and Congress to open more jobs to women.

Public Law 96-513 (DOPMA) was passed in 1980 to provide equal treatment for male and female officers. Laws governing appointment, promotion, separation and retirement were revamped, but the laws regarding the combat restrictions for women were not changed. (79:80) Also in 1980, President Carter announced his intention to resume registration for the draft. While his proposed amendment to the Military Selective Service Act would require the registration of both men and women, he made it clear that he was opposed to using women in combat roles. Congress passed Public Law 96-282 in June 1980, but specifically excluded women from registration in favor of men only. (84:9-10)

Regardless of the public acceptance of the combat exclusion laws by both Presidents Carter and Reagan during this period, the realities of the AVF and accession goals caused a growing reliance upon women in the military. The

Air Force continued to relax its interpretation of the law when it began to use enlisted women aircrew members as loadmasters, boom operators and flight engineers in 1980. In 1981, combat crew positions on the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) and KC-10 tanker were opened to enlisted women. (73:50) This trend was reinforced by Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger in a July 1983 memorandum to the service secretaries. He wrote that women should be:

"...provided full and equal opportunity with men to pursue appropriate military careers for which they can qualify. This means that military women can and should be utilized in all roles except those explicitly prohibited by combat exclusion statutes and related policy. This does not mean, however, that the combat exclusion policy can be used to justify closing career opportunities to women." (48:55)

Air Force policymakers were further influenced to broadly interpret the exclusion statutes when Congress passed the Department of Defense Authorization Act of 1985 (Public Law 98-525) which included enlistment quotas for Air Force women of 19 percent in Fiscal Year 1987 and 22 percent in Fiscal Year 1988. (84:15) The Air Force responded by opening the security specialty to women, by allowing women officers to become launch control officers for Minuteman and MX missiles, and by opening new positions on reconnaissance and airborne battlefield command and control center aircraft. (73:50)

In February 1988, the Air Force received additional guidance for interpreting the exclusion statutes. A Department of Defense (DoD) Task Force on Women in the Military recommended a new DoD-wide standard for determining which jobs can be opened to women. Secretary of Defense Frank C. Carlucci approved their recommendations which said,

From now on. . . the armed services should close a job to women only when the job carries a risk of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire or capture 'equal to or greater than' the risk for similar units in the same theater of operations." (92:3)

Using this guidance, the Air Force must now revise its combat exclusion policy and take steps to open additional positions to women, where appropriate; progress in that regard must be presented to the Secretary of Defense by May 1988. This new rule may result in opening approximately 2,000 more jobs for women in Red Horse units and mobile aerial port squadrons, and various support aircraft (reconnaissance, airlift, search-and-rescue, etc.) operating in potentially hostile areas. (92:1-24)

Four decades of debates, hearings, legislation, court rulings, executive guidance and pressure from special interest groups have caused the Air Force to continually modify its policy in order to keep pace with changing times. The tendency has been to move from a restrictive to a more liberal interpretation of the intent of the law. This has culminated in today's combat exclusion policy which is described in Air Force Regulation 35-60; yet the policy must

continue to evolve as new interpretations of the law are accepted.

#### Challenges to the Law

In a 1984 article in the JAG Journal, Ms Karla Kelly presented a legal analysis of the combat exclusion law. She said:

In this day of egalitarian ideologies and uncertain developments in domestic and foreign military policy, it is inevitable that Congress and/or military leaders will face equal protection challenges to the statutory exclusion of women from serving in combat roles. The combat exclusion policy, while serving as an underlying factor in several judicial decisions, has never been directly attacked. . . . Congress has determined that national defense interests take precedence over equality for women; a further analysis of this issue leads to the conclusion that the Supreme Court would agree. (79:77-78)

The most important case leading to this conclusion occurred in response to Public Law 96-282 in which Congress amended the Selective Service Act to reinstate the registration of men, but specifically excluded women from registration as proposed by President Carter. The Act was challenged in the Supreme Court by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of several men claiming unconstitutional gender discrimination. In 1981, the Supreme Court ruled that:

Congress acted within its constitutional authority to raise and regulate armies and navies when it authorized the registration of men and not women. (*Rostker vs Goldberg*, 453 U.S. 57 (1981)). The Court held that its greater deference to Congress in the area of national defense and military affairs was particularly appropriate because Congress had specifically considered the constitutionality of the Military Selective Service



Act. In its view, Congress was entitled to focus on the question of military need rather than equity, and the exclusion of women from combat justified excluding them from the draft. (84:10)

Furthermore, there have been numerous other military-related cases where the Supreme Court ". . . recognized its limited ability to review the decisions of Congress in the area of military affairs." (84:92)

In summarizing her analysis of the challenges to the combat exclusion law, Ms Kelly said:

The body of government empowered by the Constitution to maintain a strong defense has determined that women shall not be combatants. That decision, when subjected to minimal or close scrutiny, will undoubtedly withstand a constitutional challenge. When the concerns which underlie the exclusion of women from combat are resolved or eliminated, it is not unreasonable to expect Congress to amend that determination. Until that time, however, the courts must support the Congressional decision that the combat exclusion furthers the goal of preserving a strong, effective defense. (79:108)

Clearly, the prospects for a change in the law must be weighed along side the will of the American people to convince their elected representatives that they want to send their sisters and daughters into combat. These prospects are addressed later in this paper.

### CHAPTER III

#### IMPACT OF AIR FORCE COMBAT EXCLUSION POLICY

The combat exclusion policy raises many issues which impact force management and wartime readiness. These issues and the dilemmas which arise from them are discussed below, but first it is important to recognize the realities of modern warfare and the current utilization of women.

##### Combat or Non-Combat?

While the Air Force combat exclusion policy meets the perceived "intent" of the law (to exclude women from "direct combat" roles), it seems clear that it also places numerous Air Force women in harm's way in any future wars. It is not very difficult to imagine scenarios where, despite all precautions, combat support aircraft (airlifters, tankers, command and control, etc.) with female crew members are attacked by enemy forces. There was a risk of that happening when C-141 aircraft with female pilots landed in Grenada on a supposedly "secure" airfield while our troops were still fighting Cuban troops; one may draw on numerous other examples. (48:7-8; 75:54) Furthermore, current Air Force assignment policies place women in non-combat support roles on bases in many regions very near potential combat zones; Europe and Korea are prime examples. "In future wars, possibly having more loosely defined battlefields, rear areas may be just as dangerous as the front." (71:6)

Soviet tactical doctrine calls for deep strikes in the enemy's rear to disrupt command and control elements, capture airfields, destroy logistics installations, and interrupt transport systems. . . . they (women) are going to be targets of bombing, shelling, and small-arms fire. Significant numbers of them are going to get hurt. (75:54)

Air Force representatives have said that ". . . air bases are going to be vulnerable, and they will be attacked, and people are going to have to carry rifles and defend the air bases." (89:S16727) It appears that the Air Force has integrated women so completely in support roles worldwide that their participation in future combat is inevitable as "defensive combatants." An attachment to Air Force Regulation 35-60 contains extensive discussions with examples illustrating "relative risk," demonstrating that Air Force policymakers are fully aware of the realities of modern warfare and the dangers to women.

#### Personnel Management

Over 12 percent of Air Force members are women, and almost 19 percent of enlistments in Fiscal Year 1986 were women. (86:7) Managing a mixed-gender force of these proportions offers many challenges. Personnel policies must accommodate a delicate balance of interacting forces including combat exclusion policies, pressure from Congress and special interest groups urging greater utilization of women, equal opportunity concerns, and wartime readiness implications.

### Female Accessions

As discussed in the previous chapter, women were limited by law to 2 percent of the force from 1948 to 1967. Later, as a result of the AVF and congressional pressure in the early seventies, the Air Force rapidly increased female accessions. Now, in the eighties, the Air Force is still under pressure to increase female accessions. Prompted by Census Bureau reports of a declining pool of 18 to 26 year old males through 1996 and the negative effects that might have on recruitment under the AVF concept, Congress set statutory quotas for Air Force female accessions (19 percent in Fiscal Year 1987 and 22 percent in Fiscal Year 1988). Congress reasoned that the Air Force could absorb many more women than the other services since it had a significantly lower ratio of positions impacted by combat exclusion constraints, and that increasing female accession in the Air Force would reduce recruiting pressure for high-quality males by the other services. (83:7)

The Air Force, arguing that these quotas were arbitrary and contrary to good force management, countered with a comprehensive study. This study resulted in a new methodology for determining the level of female accessions, which went into effect in January 1986. (86:7)

Pleased with both this study and the Air Force's sustained success in recruiting women, Congress dropped the Fiscal Year 1987 quota and later pushed back the 22 percent quota to the end of Fiscal Year 1989. (86:7)

The Air Force believes that the accession quota should be removed and the Service allowed to recruit to market levels of interest and qualified applicants, regardless of sex. (81:1-6)

Two Air War College research reports in 1986 addressed both the women's quota and end strength. They looked at many factors, including combat exclusion; their conclusions seem to support the Air Force's position. In his research report, Lt Col Iskra concluded that "We do not need the minimum female accession quota. . . ." (83:42) Lt Col Tencza, Jr. presented a similar conclusion in his research report:

It is doubtful that anyone really knows the right answer with respect to the number of women who should serve on active duty. However, it would appear prudent for the Air Force to adopt a "go slow" approach until the impact of an 18 percent female accession rate can be fully evaluated. (82:23)

An Air Force Personnel Force Composition Study was completed by a Special Study Team in 1985. Significant findings include:

Extensive study and research. . . disproved Congressional concern that the shrinking pool of youths through the mid 1990s would adversely impact recruiting and the All-Volunteer Force; it showed the opposite, a healthy recruiting projection for both the Army and the Air Force in the worst case year of 1993. The study then disproved the Committee's belief that any decrease in Air Force male recruits would automatically and inversely help the Army; Rand Corporation verified that only 17 percent would enlist in the Army while 83 percent would remain civilian if they could not enlist in the Air Force. (83:39)

How does the combat exclusion policy impact the female accession issue? The Air Force Special Study Team

developed a new, integrated enlisted accessions model that was also presented in the Personnel Force Composition Study of 1985. The model contains three major components. The first component, Air Force requirements, is by far the dominant factor in this model. Requirements for women are limited primarily by aptitudinal and physical stamina entry qualifications. "Over 80 percent of the Air Force positions require a mechanical or electronic aptitude for admittance; . . . women score significantly lower than men on these two aptitudinal positions of the qualification test." (83:13-14) It also happens that most of the specialties that require high mechanical and electronic aptitudes also require high physical stamina qualifications. Taken together, the ". . . end result is that a large percentage of recruit eligible women cannot adequately perform in a large percentage of the specialties." (83:14) While ". . . entry qualifications are by far the most critical factor in determining how many women the Air Force can access, . . ." the combat exclusion policy also influences female accession. (83:13) The combat exclusion policy closes 18,600 officer positions and 10,200 enlisted positions to women. Furthermore, some additional stateside assignments must be filled by men only to allow for rotation to and from the 2,400 male-only positions overseas. (83:13) The second and third components of the model--youth characteristics in the marketplace and the effects of increasing females,

respectively--do not have a major impact on female accession requirements, but they do tend to reinforce the results of the first component of the model. The Team concluded that "... an 18 percent accession of women in FY86 was the maximum female accession level the Air Force could handle without serious complications or impact." (83:16) It appears that the combat exclusion policy does affect recruiting and female accessions for the Air Force, but not as significantly as other factors.

#### Managing the Force

The accession of women into the force at current levels has increased the complexity of force management. Assignment equity and deployment availability problems are exacerbated by pregnancies, single member parents and married couples. (82:23)

Studies show that Air Force women want to transfer between job specialties 20 percent more than men and that they have shorter careers on active duty than men; this increases training requirements. (83:19) Also, female single parents (to a greater degree than male single parents) and pregnant females have a significant influence on mobility and availability for temporary duty, requiring commanders to develop work-around solutions. (83:19, 22-23) On average, approximately 4 percent of Air Force females are pregnant. (83:23) During the pregnancy and postnatal recovery period, these women are not available for deployment,

and are many times restricted from heavy, manual labor or exposure to certain chemicals and electrical fields that could be hazardous to a fetus. The impact of these restrictions can be mission limiting in some cases; particularly in small units or shops. The Air Force has deployment requirements for approximately 136,000 active enlisted personnel. Females are almost 25 percent slower to deploy or unable to deploy than men. (83:25-26) When viewed across the entire force, these factors are probably not mission limiting at current accession levels, but clearly, they increase personnel management challenges for commanders.

Managing the force has also become more difficult because of the combat exclusion policy. In units with both combat and non-combat missions the number of women assigned must be limited. For example, C-141 units might be tasked to airdrop combat troops directly into a main battle area. The principal wartime mission of C-141 aircraft--strategic airlift--would allow the assignment of female aircrews. However, if the number of female aircrews in these units were not limited, the unit's ability to respond to combat tasking could be degraded.

There are also some Air Force units with wartime missions involving direct Army support in the battlefield. A prime example exists in the weather specialty. Air Weather Service is tasked with providing all weather support to the Army, both in garrison and in the field. Air Weather



Service relies on the policy of the supported Army customer as the primary factor in judging which units or locations are not suitable for women. In general, in units where the Army excludes women, Air Force women are excluded in the weather support role if they're tasked to deploy with the Army units. This action has resulted in the exclusion of women from weather elements in direct support of Army special forces, specified forward deployed Army units, and those units deployed forward of brigade rear.

As seen from these examples, the combat exclusion policy complicates the assignment and utilization of women in specialties normally suitable for women. An independent investigation of this issue by the General Accounting Office concluded that the combat ". . . restrictions impede the most effective management and assignment of personnel."  
(89:S16725)

#### Wartime Readiness Implications

The mission of the Air Force is to fly, fight, and win! Does the combat exclusion policy make a difference?

In a 1985 national affairs article, Newsweek writers concluded:

. . . honoring those restrictions may prove difficult. The U.S. military is defining "combat" ever more narrowly, and women are now so thoroughly integrated into the armed forces and have advanced so far in key specialties that withdrawing them could seriously hamper the country's combat-readiness. In the event of war the Pentagon could well be faced with the choice of violating at least the spirit of the law--or risk hamstringing military operations. (33:36)

Evaluating the impact of women on wartime readiness is difficult. The problems with deployment of women were addressed earlier, and some of the traditional arguments against utilizing women in combat roles will be presented in the next chapter; these discussions may shed some additional light on the readiness question. But most important, the combat exclusion policy impacts wartime readiness by limiting flexibility. According to Senator Proxmire:

. . . the myth of the day is that our armed services' combat exclusion policies enhance our national security. In reality barring women from combat has resulted in complex and arbitrary restrictions that limit our military flexibility. (88:S3182)

Addressing the integration of women throughout the services and the limits to flexibility, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower said:

. . . men could not realistically be substituted for women in units preparing for combat. Under many circumstances you just don't have that much warning. Women are an integral part of units. (88:S3183)

Combat exclusion restrictions probably don't hinder flexibility and readiness for the Air Force nearly as much as for the Army and Marines. The relatively high number of combat positions and the very nature of ground combat give the Army and Marines cause for concern when viewing replacement pools in rear echelons that may contain too many women. Field commanders could experience a ". . . degrading effect on combat operations because of their diminished capability to use available assets to reconstitute forces which have

suffered casualties." (75:54) While not a problem of equal magnitude for the Air Force, similar scenarios are possible.

Does the combat exclusion policy have negative war-time readiness implications for the Air Force? Probably not, but the answer depends on female accessions, effective force management, and the reaction of the American public during wartime. Commanders must continue to effectively manage complex personnel issues surrounding assignment, utilization and deployment of women, and female accessions must not increase to a level that produces unacceptable limits on flexibility. Lt Col Iskra's study concluded that ". . . accession beyond 18 percent will require added study for impact on the Air Force mission." (83:26) If the National Command Authority or Congress were influenced by a public outcry resulting from female wartime casualties in a future conflict, they might react drastically and demand the recall of women from hostile zones. The combat exclusion policy both limits women from some roles and at the same time opens many other nontraditional roles to women. These factors potentially limit flexibility, but the effect on wartime readiness is not easily quantified.

## CHAPTER IV

### WOMEN IN COMBAT: ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST

#### Should women serve in combat?

The debate is complex and emotional. Perspective is lost among a hail of arguments. Exhaustive research, studies and surveys have been inclusive because the basic issues defy empirical analysis. A solution will require reaffirmation of the nature of the military profession in a democratic society and its role in an increasingly technologically complex world. (80:28)

Those who emphasize equal rights and responsibilities say women in the armed forces cannot advance to the top without experience in combat units. Some go even beyond this, and say that women cannot be equal in society as long as they are barred from full participation in all levels of the national security system. In their view, modern weapons have equalized the potentiality for women in combat since wars are less likely to be fought on a hand-to-hand basis, and have made it impossible to protect women from the destructiveness of combat. In any event, they claim, properly trained women would be able to fight successfully and exempting them from combat is not fair to men.

Those opposed to women in combat contend that the protection of women is a mark of civilization and a method of safeguarding the human race. They point out that countries such as Israel and the Soviet Union, in which women have fought in emergencies, do not now place women in combat positions. This view holds that the national security would be jeopardized because women are not as strong or aggressive as men and their presence would impair the individual and group effectiveness of men. They disagree with the assumption that modern technology has significantly reduced the direct physical nature of combat, especially ground combat. They see permitting women in combat as an extreme deviation from tradition which would detract from the dignity and femininity of women and disturb family cohesion to such an extent that it might make society fall apart. (84:9)

The debate on this question is fraught with emotion based on cultural attitudes and opinions. Furthermore, the societal perception of combat normally is that of hand-to-

hand ground combat and the horrors of war. Therefore, the debate may not be very important to the Air Force, where relatively few positions are restricted to men only; most of those positions are designated for aircrew members. In fact, some authors argue quite convincingly that ". . . one's gender does not determine whether an individual has the 'right stuff' to fly combat aircraft." (3:iii)

According to a recent GAO report, some Air Force officials believe women can successfully fly aircraft in combat and repeal of the exclusion law would provide for more flexible personnel management, but that a policy which opens combat positions to women is a social question which can only be addressed by Congress. (89:S16727) If this is true, it seems that the question is not if women should be allowed in combat roles, but rather when and to what extent should women be allowed in combat roles.

It is not the purpose of this paper to resolve the "women in combat" issue. That is clearly a decision which rests with the American people and their elected representatives. However, some of the traditional arguments--female physiology, technological change, combat effectiveness implications, sociological limits, international military posture, and career progression--are summarized here to acquaint policymakers with the dialogue on this issue. This review also shows the level of uncertainty surrounding the maintenance of an effective fighting force if women were

allowed to serve in combat roles. Admittedly, most of these arguments seem to apply more to ground combat forces than to the Air Force.

#### Female Physiology

The most common argument against women in combat is that they lack the physical strength and stamina needed, ". . . not only to fight, but to survive and to perform the daily tasks required for living during prolonged periods of primitive, arduous, and stressful conditions." (72:30)

Studies confirm that men do possess greater physical capacity than women. Anthropometric and body composition differences give women only 55 percent the strength, explosive power, speed, and throwing and jumping abilities of their male counterparts; and cardiorespiratory differences give women only 67 percent the physical endurance and heat tolerance as their male counterparts. (77:52; 33:38)

Opponents claim these physical limitations could limit the military's ability to wage war successfully. (74:39)

Advocates argue that proper physical standards and physical training would ensure that both women and men are physically qualified for their combat positions. Furthermore, they point out that there are many combat positions which don't have high physical requirements; there are many women who could qualify physically, but are currently restricted only because of proximity to the battle zone. (77:52-55; 74:39)

Another common argument against women in combat involves unacceptable inefficiencies and reduced wartime readiness caused by pregnancy, menstruation and abortion. The personnel management complexities and wartime readiness implications of women in the Air Force was already discussed in the previous chapter; generally, women are less able to deploy rapidly and their presence in the force complicates force management. Approximately 4 percent of Air Force women and 10 percent of Army women are pregnant at any given time. A 1982 Air Force study showed women tend to spend more time away from the job for medical reasons than men; pregnancy was one of the factors. (83:22) Advocates cite DoD studies showing that women lose only half as much time as men, who tend to lose time because of desertion, alcohol and drug abuse, and disciplinary action. (77:57) Menstruation is often mentioned with regard to a women's inability to handle the stress of combat during her period, the difficulties of maintaining feminine hygiene in the field, and the concomitant lack of privacy. Opponents claim that a women's unique requirements cause unnecessary administrative and logistical burdens that hinder combat effectiveness. (76:49)

#### Technological Change

Advocates for women in combat counter the concerns about lower physical strength by saying that technological

advances have changed wars into push-button conflicts where less than 10 percent of the jobs require actual fighting.

(33:38)

They contend that because women are inherently no less adept than men at flying jets, driving tanks, conning ships, or other combat skills that do not require great strength, it is appropriate to include them in U.S. fighting units. . . . (76:46)

Opponents argue that ". . . there are no push-button wars today, nor will there be any in the near future."

(72:30) It seems logical to assume that physical strength will always be required to do many critical tasks such as digging foxholes, carrying wire barriers and communications wires, lifting and loading heavy ammunition, missiles and other ordinance, lifting bulky camouflage nets, conducting rapid runway repair tasks, and many other physical tasks that are critical to successful combat operations.

#### Combat Effectiveness Implications

Perhaps the most important issue bearing on this controversy is the effect women may have on the cohesiveness of combat troops. (79:103) Brigadier General Gatsis, who retired after 36 years as a professional combat infantryman, explains:

A military unit is more than the equivalent of individuals exercising technical skills. These technical skills play only a small part in molding a fighting unit. It is male-to-male bonding that provides unit cohesion and combat effectiveness. Without this crucial bonding, units disintegrate under stress no matter how technically proficient or well-equipped they are. The presence of women and the inevitable liaisons that develop will destroy this bonding that takes place among



men, which is so essential for their courage to face danger and death together. Unit cohesion is vital--it saves lives--and we should not trifle with it. . . . We might get by with this expensive and devastating foolishness in peacetime but, when national survival is at stake, it surely will result in disaster. (72:30-31)

Other opponents point out that unit cohesion and combat effectiveness are hurt by many factors surrounding the inclusion of women to combat units. For example, disciplinary problems are caused by fraternization and sexual harassment. (73:50-51) Furthermore, men may be inhibited in their speech and actions in a naturally-macho environment, may patronize or reject women because of perceived weakness, and may break group loyalties to compete for individual sexual or romantic gratification. (76:46-47)

Another concern is:

. . . the demoralizing effect death or capture of women would have on both the soldiers and on. . . society. One. . . military leader expressed the certainty in his mind that male soldiers would risk all the lives of men in a unit rather than leave a wounded female soldier behind on the battlefield to die or fall into enemy hands." (79:105)

On the other hand, proponents for sexual integration of combat units argue that women may actually enhance combat effectiveness and reject the male-bonding thesis, concluding:

The mechanisms by which bonding takes place in any social group are misunderstood by many who use the term frequently. Bonding refers to the psychological process that occurs within a group that possesses an attribute that sets it apart from society as a whole. Bonding allows an individual to feel comfortable within a group, to subordinate his or her personality for the good of the entire group.

It is not true that bonding occurs only among males or to a lesser degree among women. Bonding is strongest in the military on a squad level. Each succeeding step up in structure sees bonding grow weaker. Just as morale can be enhanced by a good leader, so too can bonding. Every good manager, in the military or out, understands and encourages this process. (48:57)

#### Sociological Limits

All societies establish norms of acceptable and expected behavior. These norms are the result of historical experience, national and religious tradition, and natural instinct; thus they may change over time. Societies as a whole, as well as individuals within a society, tend to be culturally conditioned. Opponents of women in combat point out that American society has a high standard of chivalry, and that ". . . Americans are culturally conditioned to believe that national defense is a man's job and that men are protectors of women, who are the nurturers." (31:72) They also argue that ". . . women are simply too valuable a resource to be consumed in combat." (77:60) The very survival of the society in a major war with massive casualties may rely on its women to bear a new generation. Those opposed to women in combat also question whether the American public is ready to have their daughters and sisters come home in body bags, or whether they can accept the suffering of women subjected to the horrors of combat. It seems that the American public is still more sensitive to women subjected to the suffering of war than it is to the suffering of men. (74:37; 78:52) If that's true, would

they become demoralized and demand removal of women from combat in the midst of the war? Those in favor of women in combat cite changing cultural values and attitudes by pointing out the changes to traditional roles for women over the past 2 decades. (74:37)

#### International Military Posture

The potential threat to our international military posture or national image is another concern about the unknown effects of integration of women in combat roles that is debated:

Much of the purpose of this country's modern armed force is to convince the world that it can and will defeat anyone who attacks it. Not only can a strong military image deter those who might consider aggression, it also encourages allies to invest faith and support in their relationship with the United States.

What will be the effect on U.S. military credibility if its combat forces include females, especially in the eyes of a world that stubbornly insists that there are differences between men and women? . . . Would an army or navy with women in its ranks be weak or dispirited? Certainly it would appear so to a traditional army of rigidly disciplined Warsaw Pact combat troops or a rabble of radically macho Middle East adversaries. The mere appearance of weakness could tip the balance in a military engagement; more important, it could help an aggressor decide whether to fight at all. (76:49)

. . . moreover, since male casualties are more "acceptable" to the American public, what better target for hostile forces than female troops? The lower "acceptable" number of female casualties would give hostile forces unnecessary and perhaps devastating political leverage. (79:105)

Proponents, on the other hand, argue that:

. . . women have always been associated with defensive warfare. . . using women in combat. . . is associated not only with being an underdog, but also with a fierce commitment to the justness of one's cause. Apparently

women lend moral sanction to actions in which they participate. Thus, when women assume military roles, a nation signals the defensive nature and moral rectitude of its action. (78:54)

#### Career Progression

A common argument from women in the military, women's equality groups, and some Congressmen is that excluding women from combat negatively effects women's career progression, morale and retention. They claim that career advancement is tied to combat experience or experience in combat units and that exclusion of women keeps them from getting the key policymaking, career-enhancing jobs needed for promotion and major command. (85:10A; 89:S16725-S16727) Pentagon officials counter with promotion statistics and examples of high-ranking female officers serving in high-level military policy-making positions; saying DOPMA has eliminated promotion inequities. (79:85-86) Others question the motives of the female officers who agitate for combat roles, but this attack on motives only delays resolution of the issue and serves no useful purpose. (35:10A)

While these arguments seem to apply more to ground forces, Air Force policymakers must consider them--they inject uncertainty into decisions concerning utilization of women. Building on a review of combat exclusion law and Air Force policy in the previous chapters, the rest of this paper provides a historical perspective to the issue and investigates American attitudes about women in combat.

## CHAPTER V

### WOMEN IN COMBAT: AROUND THE WORLD AND THROUGH THE AGES

Current US combat exclusion legislation and the supporting Air Force policy are by no means unique--either geographically around the nations of the world or in a broader historical US context. Long before this nation was founded, the cultural practices, religious beliefs, and values of societies all over the globe were shaping opinions about the use of women warriors. These ideas continue to influence the laws and policies of modern nations everywhere.

Given the broad international and evolutionary scope of this issue, an expanded examination of the concept--beyond its post-World War II development in this country--is useful in addressing two persistent questions which inevitably concern policymakers. The first of these questions is: can women actually perform the combat function? The second question is: is it proper for them to engage in that role?

This chapter will explore answers to the first question, by looking to history for evidence of women's performance in the combat arena. The second question--the question of propriety--involves an examination of cultural attitudes and will be addressed in the next chapter.

As with just about everything connected with this issue, even the relevance of historical experience is fraught with debate. Advocates assert that the historical

record provides conclusive evidence that women can be effective in combat. Skeptics recognize that the involvement of women in war has been rather commonplace throughout history, but they question whether the historical records available really prove much.

They have provided support from the sidelines; they have suffered their share of casualties. But for the most part women have been caught up in combat as victims rather than as participants. Their loss of innocence has been largely an involuntary one.

Admittedly, the occasional Joan of Arc, the Molly Pitcher, has appeared on the scene of battle. The list of names is unsurprisingly short. We can remember it because it is brief, novel, anomalous. Participation by women in combat has been more at the symbolic level than the real. (7:65)

While the use of women in organized armies has indeed been rare, the use of women as combatants has been more commonplace than many realize--and understanding how they fared in that role certainly has some bearing on the issue.

There is yet another factor to be considered when reviewing historical accounts about women in combat, and that is the suggestion by some researchers that available chronicles may not tell the whole story about women's performance in that role.

Historians often ignore or discount women's contribution to warfare. Most intelligence officers are males whose world-view is born of conventional Eastern European stereotypic sex-role attitudes. If woman's role is defined solely as that of peaceful wife and mother, we can see why journalists, intelligence officers and historians are emotionally and intellectually incapable of reporting on women as fighting troops. (59:4)

This assertion, curious though it may sound, was

corroborated in a footnote to the report of a sociologist who studied gender integration during a Joint Chiefs of Staff exercise conducted in 1982:

Interestingly, some of the men tended sometimes to "forget" that women had been part of this experience. When one man was recounting a particular experience to a group of other squadron members, one of the women spoke up and reminded him, "You don't have to tell me. I was there, remember?" This may relate to the larger process of historical denial of women's presence and contributions in a combat environment. (12:551)

If there is any truth to this theory that history may have neglected women's contributions on the battlefield, then it seems plausible that thoughtful policymakers would wish to avail themselves of the historical information that is available, however incomplete it may be. As it stands, history is replete with instances of females in combat environments. The roles they played varied widely, and this variance has significance when considering how effective women might actually be on the battlefields of the future. One researcher categorized female involvement into three roles: an auxiliary role (where women served formally or informally in a supporting, noncombat role to enhance men's effectiveness in combat), a combat role (where women actually participated as combatants), and a leadership role (where women served as leaders of military forces but were not involved in actual battle. (58:26)

The service of women nurses and doctors in combat areas has sometimes been raised as evidence of women's

success in "combat." Although this service provides useful evidence in support of related issues--such as emotional stability, courage under fire, and ability to function under difficult battlefield conditions--any careful analysis must recognize that a clear distinction exists between medical and other servicemen and women in a theater of war.

. . . there are special rules of customary and conventional international law which regulate their function and confer protections on medical personnel, regardless of sex. Under those rules, medical personnel are classed as non-combatants; as such they do not take up arms except in self-defence of their patients. Protection is not personal, but is to their calling: they are required to aid all wounded and sick, friend and foe alike. (27:22)

Therefore, since the issue under study here involves women as actual combatants in the military, this survey will focus on the second category (women as combat participants) except when the experiences of female medical personnel are germane to relevant combat concerns for which there are no historical precedents--such as the prisoner of war question.

History likewise records numerous instances of women's contributions in terrorist and espionage roles. Such accounts will also be excluded from this study to focus more precisely on women who participated in groups organized to inflict violence on an enemy. Participation in guerilla warfare fits this criterion and will therefore be considered here together with the use of women in the more conventional combat roles.



Since this study has been designed expressly for US Air Force policymakers, a special section on women aviators has also been included, together with information on specialized tests which have recently been undertaken by other nations, as well as a summary of the various laws currently governing the use of military women in other countries.

Women in Organized Combat: From Antiquity to World War

One of the earliest references to women in combat is found in Greek mythology where women warriors called Amazons are mentioned. Though there must have been some basis for the myth of the Amazons, there is precious little solid historical evidence to substantiate their existence, save some ancient Greek art depicting them in combat and evidences of armed women found in excavations of ancient ruins. (57:2-3) The myth conjures up images of women warriors in the extreme, who inhabited Asia and western regions of Africa:

The word, Amazon, came from the Greek word for "breastless" because it was said that the right breast of the women was cut off when they were children so that it would not interfere with the use of the bow. In the Amazon tribes, the men attended to menial tasks while the women were in charge of government and warfare. A woman was not allowed to marry until she had slain at least one enemy on the battlefield. (57:2)

Perhaps more reliable is the story recorded by the ancient Chinese author Sun Tzu, who wrote about the female combat unit he trained for the King of Wu about 500 BC. Of this story, one modern analyst writes, ". . . it does suggest

that 25 centuries ago one Chinese military man could train women to be soldiers, even though (like some modern men) he seemed to doubt that they should become warriors." (58:27)

Women of antiquity apparently participated in the defense of besieged Greek and Roman cities. Roman accounts, for example, indicate that women fought in the last defense of Carthage in 146 BC. (58:27) It is interesting to note, however, that the men of that period took deliberate steps to conceal their women's participation, presumably fearing that the enemy would accurately assess the defender's situation as desperate.

Better documented are accounts from the mid-nineteenth century of King Gezo's "she-soldiers" of Dahomey. This African King created a segregated elite corps of female warriors after observing that his male warriors always broke first when actually engaged. He personally chaired a selection committee which chose the strongest and finest girls in his tribe as candidates for the corps.

The girl would be. . . submitted to a course of training that would stand comparison with that of any modern commando course. . . . They lived well. . . had the power of life and death over even male warriors. In return, they were expected to, and did, fight to the last. She was also expected not to have a sex-life until after she had retired from the corps. . . if a woman was discovered to have taken a lover both were executed. As jungle fighters, these women warriors excelled--"few troops anywhere have equalled and none bettered them." (27:24)

That these women warriors were extremely effective is generally accepted. Of note, however, is one of the reasons

why they faded from African warfare. Apparently, Dahomey men successfully exerted pressure to eliminate the corps since its existence prohibited them from marrying the tribe's most desirable women until they left the army--often wounded or aged. At least one historian thus concluded that large-scale use of women in front-line combat has serious implications for warring societies:

The Dahomey experiment proved that employing women in combat roles is subjected to diminishing returns: the birthrate fell and the quality of the children declined. (27:25)

#### European Feudal Fighting

From the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, feudal systems in Europe influenced the character of women's participation in armed conflict. Most recorded instances depict women as defenders of castles or fortresses. One notable exception to this pattern was Joan of Arc, whose military exploits in bringing Charles VII to the French throne in 1429 made her the most celebrated female figure of medieval Europe. What makes Joan especially unique is her participation as both a combat leader and an active combatant.

Primarily she served as an inspiration and cohering force in uniting the French to fight. Her tactics brought about a much-needed updating of French war-making techniques. She served Charles VII and France as a strategist, tactician, logistician, and fighter or soldier, actively engaging in the fighting on a number of occasions. (57:54)

### The Revolutionaries

With the passage of feudalism and the rise of the nation state, women joined with men in wars of revolution where armies were organized to fight for causes. In the colonial United States, women had participated in Indian fighting long before the American Revolution. Once the American fight for freedom was underway, some women disguised themselves as men, served in combat, and eventually received pensions for their service. One historian whose studies have concentrated exclusively on military women observed that such masquerades were neither difficult nor unusual:

It is not as difficult as might be thought for a tall, slim woman, especially a teenager, to pass as a man. It has been done in many wars besides the American Revolution. During the Civil War at least 400 women posed as soldiers. Of course, those who got away with the masquerade and were never caught are beyond our ability to count. (44:16)

Pension records do exist for two women, Margaret Corbin and Deborah Sampson. Margaret Corbin may have been the legendary "Molly Pitcher"--the mysterious heroine, usually identified with the Battle of Monmouth, who took her husband's place as artilleryman when he collapsed from a wound or heat exhaustion. Some scholars suspect that the Pitcher story was contrived to symbolize the hundreds (some say thousands) of women who were recruited by the Continental Army to carry water for cooling red-hot cannon barrels. Although historians disagree as to whether or not Corbin (nicknamed "Captain Molly") is the source of the Molly

Pitcher legend, her experience of dressing as a man to join her husband John in the 1776 battle of Fort Washington is nevertheless better documented. Wounded by grapeshot, Congress awarded Corbin a pension in 1779, and she was buried at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y. (44:16)

The other woman for whom pension records still exist was Deborah Sampson, who enlisted disguised as Robert Shirliffe in 1782 and served for 3 years in the 4th Massachusetts Regiment. She is said to have performed bravely on several occasions, but was ultimately wounded in gunfire and discovered to be a woman by the Army surgeon. Sampson received an honorable discharge (in secret) and was eventually awarded a veteran's pension. Her husband later asked for and received double her pension award for "taking care of her wounds." (42:83)

America was not the only place where women were disguising themselves as men in order to fight. Another well-known warrior of the eighteenth century was Anne Talbot, known to fellow soldiers as John Taylor, who "served as both a foot soldier and sailor during the Napoleonic War." (18:19)

#### Nineteenth Century Wars Between Nations and States

The use of disguises continued in the War of 1812, where a woman named Lucy Brewer dressed as a man, called herself George Baker, joined the Marines, and served on the USS Constitution for 3 years. Today she is known as "the

first girl marine." (1:3)

A breakthrough of sorts occurred during the Crimean War in the 1850s, when Florence Nightingale's determined efforts broke down resistance to female nursing auxiliaries.

The American Civil War further promoted the idea of nursing as a legitimate profession for women, and the name of Clara Barton rings a familiar bell as the founder of the American Red Cross. Even so, when the war ended in 1865, the Army sent the women home and reverted to using enlisted men for patient care. (3:2)

A number of sources agree that about 400 women saw combat during the Civil War by serving in the Army in disguise. Some were never discovered until they were killed or wounded, whereas for others disguises proved totally inadequate.

When the Spanish American War broke out in 1898, women gained increasing acceptance functioning in their auxiliary role as nurses, but little is recorded with regard to a combatant role of any kind. Nevertheless, their outstanding service led Congress to establish the Army Nurse Corps in 1901 and the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908. "Although full military status, rank, and privileges would not come for years, the way was paved for increased use of women with the military." (1:4)

## American Women in the World Wars

### World War I

For as long as American women have participated in military activities, there has been debate about their proper roles. Historically, there is little question that successful US experiences with military nurses paved the way to experiment with women in other roles and provided some basis for predicting how well women might react and fare under battlefield conditions. During World War I, close to 10,000 Army nurses were assigned in Europe. (20:59)

Placing women in other kinds of jobs was another matter entirely. General Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, urgently requested the War Department to send uniformed women for service as telephone operators, office workers and administrators, but Washington replied that the War Department was "not convinced of the desirability of such a radical departure in the conduct of military affairs." (66:50)

The Navy, however, found a loophole--and used it.

In 1916, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels asked his legal advisor, "Is there any law that says a yeoman must be a man?" The answer was no. "Then enroll women in the Naval Reserve as yeomen," he said, "and we will have the best clerical assistance the country can provide." (1:5)

By today's standards, this seems a rather modest departure from accepted norms, but by the standards of the day, it was a radical move indeed. Nicknamed "Yeomanettes," 12,000 women

enlisted in the Naval Reserve by the end of the war. The Marine Corps came to the same conclusion a year later and enlisted 300 women ("Marinettes"). Other women joined the Coast Guard.

These Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard women were the first to be given full military rank and status in the US military. Besides clerical jobs, they served as translators, draftsmen, munitions workers, fingerprint experts, camouflage designers, and recruiters. (1:6) At this point in time, however, it was still considered unthinkable for American females to "actually" serve in the military, so after the war the women were transferred to inactive status and discharged.

Of note is the fact that several plans were submitted during the years between the World Wars which suggested establishing women permanently in the military. The idea was to provide an opportunity to resolve integration problems in peacetime, rather than to add to the confusion in time of war. One of these studies, developed by Major Everett S. Hughes, was sent to the Army Chief of Staff in 1928 and again in 1930--but was shelved both times.

Hughes' plan was notable for the fact that he postulated several areas of concern and developed solutions to address them, thereby smoothing integration of women into the military. For example, "he considered advance training essential for both women and men so that women setting up the corps in wartime could comprehend Army thinking and men making decisions about women could understand the problems of militarizing women." (1:7)



## World War II

In 1941, Congresswoman Edith Rogers advised the Army Chief of Staff, General Marshall, that she was submitting legislation to give women full military status so that they would have the same protections and benefits afforded to men in the event that they served. This had not been the case in World War I. (66:52) General Marshall supported the idea in a speech to Congress and encountered resistance both there and in the War Department. By November, the General declared, "I want a women's corps right away and I don't want any excuses!" (20:60) Nevertheless, Congressional opposition remained strong, in spite of the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, until May 1942 when the bill passed and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was introduced. In June 1943, Congress passed a bill which converted the WAAC to the WAC (Women's Army Corps), "whose members would serve directly in and not merely with the Army." (20:61)

The Navy WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) was established in July 1942. These women served in a multitude of nontraditional jobs from Air Traffic Control to Parachute Rigger to Aviation Gunnery Instructor. (70:30) The Coast Guard Women's Reserve or SPARS was formed in the same year, taking its name from the Coast Guard's motto and translation: "Semper Paratus--Always Ready." (38:2)

In 1943, the Army Air Force merged two existing

groups (the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron and the Women's Flying Training Detachment) to form the Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASPs). Forerunners of modern female Air Force pilots, the WASPs were civilians, hired under Civil Service but subject to military procedures.

Over 25,000 women applied for the program, 1,830 were accepted and 1,074 completed the training. Between September 1942 and December 1944, women pilots flew about 60 million miles all over the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean, in 77 different types of aircraft from the P-51 Mustang to the B-29 Superfortress, logged nearly 300,000 flying hours, ferried 12,650 aircraft, towed gunnery targets, instructed male pilots in instrument flying, served as test pilots, and performed a variety of other routine and hazardous flying duties. Thirty eight WASPs lost their lives in aircraft accidents. (1:10)

General Hap Arnold, Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, sought congressional approval of full military status for the WASPs in 1944, but the bill was defeated and the organization was deactivated in December of that year. Addressing the last graduating class of WASP pilots, General Arnold said:

You, and more than nine hundred of your sisters, have shown that you can fly wingtip to wingtip with your brothers. If ever there was a doubt in anyone's mind that women can become skillful pilots, the WASP have dispelled that doubt. It is on the record that women can fly as well as men. . . . Certainly we haven't been able to build an airplane you can't handle. . . . (3:3)

The largest contingent of Army women served in Europe, and they received a warm tribute from the Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower, who later commented on their performance in that theater:

During the time I have had the WACs under my command they have met every test and task assigned to them. . . . Their contributions in efficiency, skill, spirit, and determination are immeasurable. (18:51)

On the other side of the world, some 5,500 Army women served in the southwest Pacific area, primarily in Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines. (20:63) General MacArthur called the WACs in the Pacific theater "my best soldiers" and confided that the women "worked harder than men, complained less, and were better disciplined." (18:51)

Over 265,000 American women answered the recruiting call during World War II. The majority served in traditional areas, but many broke with tradition and served in more unconventional fields--though none could be classified as direct combat. However, their service took them around the world, to jobs that sometimes took them into combat areas--in some cases to become prisoners of war. Perhaps one of the most important lessons from the participation of American women in World War II is that they performed very well in virtually every task assigned. It remained for women of other nationalities to demonstrate how the fairer sex could perform in direct combat roles.

#### Women of Other Nations in the World Wars

##### Soviet Women

It was in Russia that probably the first instance of using women in modern warfare occurred. During World War I, women fought individually under the Tsar and in women's

battalions after the fall of the Tsar. However, it is impossible to assess the ability of the women to fight due to the lack of weapons and training, general disarray of the Russian Army, and political bickering of the era. (59:5)

Some 80,000 women were used in various capacities, including combat, by the Communists during their Civil War with anti-Communists. Although the predominant role of these women was combat support, women also fought directly as riflemen, armored train commanders, gunners, and demolition troops. Most were integrated into male units. (2:2)

Information about Soviet women in World War II is much more plentiful, and the data makes it clear (even when allowing for distortions of the Soviet Press and the tendency to exaggerate on the subject) that the performance of women in The Great War surpassed "that of all other wars in human history." (2:2) According to a study performed by the Defense Intelligence Agency, about one million women actually fought in the war out of a total force of 12 million. (52:iv) Thus, women constituted 8 percent of the Soviet combatants. About 500,000 actually served at the front either in combat or support roles.

The effectiveness of these women is hard to measure. By the end of the war, it was reported that women trained by the Central Sniper Training Center had killed 11,280 troops. Women firing anti-aircraft batteries were reported by one German source to be quite good shots. The Soviets have

claimed that their women were effective in tank operations.

(2:3) The Red Air Force formed two bomber regiments and one fighter regiment in which women filled all aircrew and support positions.

The interceptor regiment is reported to have downed 38 enemy planes....By the time the night bombers were operating in Poland, they were flying 300 sorties a night. (2:3)

By all accounts, the women were not timid about stepping up to fight. When Radio Moscow broadcast an appeal for experienced women fliers to volunteer for action, 2000 applications were received. The new recruits were screened by Major Marina Raskova, Russia's "Amelia Earhart," and she minced no words about the dangers of the job ahead:

"The girls I do choose must understand beyond any doubt that they will be fighting against men, and they must themselves fight like men. If you're chosen you may not be killed--you may be burned so your own mother would not recognize you. You may be blinded. You may lose a hand, a leg. You will lose your friends. You may be captured by the Germans. Do you really want to go through with this?" (18:29)

Apparently they did; not a single girl withdrew. The Germans were to discover these women aviators could be just as deadly as the men.

Much is said today about the difficulty women have in handling various types of battlefield equipment. Advocates argue that women can do the job, but some modifications would be necessary. History informs us that this was the approach used by the Russians to accommodate their women

warriors, particularly with the cumbersome controls of World War II aircraft.

Their fighter and bomber planes also had to be modified for feminine physiques that could not reach rudder pedals without special blocks, and seat cushions had to be raised to allow women to have all-around vision in the cockpit. Just manipulating the cumbersome and obsolescent YAK bombers often required the combined leverage of both pilot and copilot to yank back the stick at takeoff. (18:31)

When it came to the actual combat, women later admitted their fears probably more openly than most men would, but they--like their male counterparts--also indicated that the fears vanished in the intense concentration and exhilaration demanded by battle itself. As one woman explained:

(I was). . . retching as I taxied out for take-off. I felt like switching off and getting out. . . . But it was strange: the moment the aircraft left the ground and I raised that undercarriage, all my nerves disappeared." (18:31)

One of the women bombardiers recalled her "fantastic sense of achievement" in making her first raid. But the thrill of successes was quickly balanced by the sobering realization that not everyone returned from these adventures, and the harsh realities of battle cemented these women into a formidable team, which drew the attention of the enemy:

Flying up to ten sorties a night back and forth across the front lines during the desperate, climactic months of the battles around Stalingrad in the autumn of 1943, the Russian women earned the respect of the Germans for their courage and skill; they were dubbed "the night witches." (18:32)

Not all of the women pilots flew with the all-female

regiments. Those assigned to male units faced a dual challenge: fight the enemy as well as the resistance of their comrades. The story of Lieutenant Lily Litvak illustrates.

The commanding officer of the unit near Stalingrad to which she was initially posted in August 1943 refused to let her fly with his men and ordered her to seek an immediate transfer. But Lieutenant Litvak turned her considerable charm to advantage with the plea she made for just one chance to prove her combat skill. The skeptical Red Air Force commander could not resist, and Lily was given a plane to show what she could do. After a dogfight in which she skillfully outmaneuvered a German to share the "kill" of a Messerschmitt 109, Lieutenant Litvak removed all doubts about a woman's ability in combat. She was welcomed to a permanent place in the squadron. (18:33)

Lily Litvak, nicknamed the "Rose of Stalingrad," went on to become a Soviet fighter "ace" with 12 kills to her credit before she was shot down in a mass attack of German Me-109s and failed to bail out.

Lily's assignment to an all-male unit was not unusual. Records show that most women did, in fact, serve in mixed units, but aside from stories about legendary figures like Lily, there is little documentation of any problems with integration. In the ground combat role, Soviet sources did report, however, women having trouble with tasks involving upper body strength (i.e. in climbing and in throwing grenades). (2:3)

Yet accounts have been made of women who performed extraordinary feats of strength, persistence, and endurance

on the battlefield. One such account was provided by Marshal of the Soviet Union, General Vasili Chuikov, who served as Commander of the renowned 62nd Army during the historic Battle of Stalingrad. He described the activities of a woman orderly called Tamara Shmakova, whom he knew personally, who carried seriously wounded soldiers from the firing line:

She would crawl up to the wounded man on all fours. . . and bind his wounds. . . . To remove a man from the battlefield, two men, with or without stretchers, are normally needed. But more often than not Tamara coped alone. What she did was to crawl under the wounded man, and, straining every muscle, would carry on her back a living load sometimes one and a half times or twice her own weight. But when a wounded man could not be lifted, she would spread out her ground-sheet, roll the wounded man on to it, and again on all fours, drag the heavy burden behind her. . . . Many men alive today owe their lives to her. . . . There were many heroines like Tamara in the 62nd Army. (14:232)

At the end of the war, the Soviet Union terminated its conscription of women and demobilized most of those in service. Some speculate that there was a practical reason for this: ". . . the regime apparently believed that in peacetime it is easier to run an all-male army backed by a small core of female specialists." (2:4) Opponents of women in combat take a much more extreme view. Phyllis Schlafly, spokeswoman against women in combat, flatly declared in a January 1988 editorial:

"The only two nations that used women in combat in modern times, Russia and Israel, both abandoned the policy because it doesn't work. We should study their experience and find out why." (35:10a)

Extensive review of the historical record neither confirms



nor denies Schlafly's harsh condemnation of the service of those one million Soviet women who served their country in crisis. Rather, another possibility, drawn from the African Dahomey experiment, emerges. Could it be that these war-weary societies, whose populations were ravaged by modern conflict, experienced an overriding need at war's end for their women to return home--not because their military service was inadequate--but because it was now time get on with the creation of life rather than the destruction of it? Unfortunately, there is simply no way to balance the conflicting impressions about Soviet women combatants in any scientific way. Yet the experience remains key to the issue of women in combat today, and further study by serious policymakers is warranted.

#### Yugoslav Women

Statistics indicate that one million Yugoslavians were mobilized to fight during World War II, of which 100,000 were women. Another two million performed administrative functions. One man, Andor Dverk, wrote of his experiences with the female Yugoslavian partisans, saying:

"Those women were a horror--Attila incarnate!. . . . One of our women, Mira, was a crack shot and had thirty-four Germans to her credit in combat. . . not just prisoner killing, but in real fighting. . . . (She was) tough and stocky, in her early twenties. . . . She could use a machine pistol with the best of us." (16:35)

Researchers indicate that there is extensive documentation attesting to the exploits of these military women. However,

these women too were returned to more traditional roles after the war was over.

#### German Women

Germany was the least receptive to the use of women in combat during the World Wars, invoking cultural values that were "almost totally hostile to the use of women in warfare in any capacity except as industrial workers and quasi-servants and clerical people." (2:5)

#### British Women

Unlike German women in both wars, British women served in large numbers as members of all kinds of auxiliaries and in military roles. However, the British experience differed from that of the Russians in that they, the British, in not suffering a land invasion chose to classify women as noncombatants and deny them training in combat weapons. They were used in defensive combat support roles as aircraft plotters and served under fire while manning anti-aircraft batteries, searchlights, and barrage balloons. (27:24)

There was one curious exception where British women were used as fighters, and this was in the quasi-military organization known as the First Aid Nurse Yeomanry (FANY) Corps.

The unofficial status of the FANY Corps meant its members, unlike the ATS, were not restricted to non-combatant duties and could, therefore, carry and use small arms. This was seen as a major asset by the SOE (Special Operations Executive) who, requiring women to

undertake all manner of confidential work, saw in the FANYs a logical partner. (45:119)

French-speaking FANYs were thus trained as commandos and parachuted behind German lines to engage in espionage. One such woman, Nancy Wake, was in charge of 7,000 people and led her men in commando raids against the Germans for nearly 18 months. (59:6)

No scientific surveys were conducted to assess the effectiveness of women as compared to men during their wartime service. Most British women were demobilized after the war.

#### Swedish and Danish Women

Neither Sweden nor Denmark used women as combatants in the armed forces during either world war. "Sweden was an armed neutral in both wars, while occupied Denmark had a resistance movement during World War II." (2:9)

#### French Women

It is believed that a number of French women and girls served as spies, saboteurs, arms smugglers, and liaison officers in the Free French underground; however there is little documentation available on women's role in the French resistance.

#### Women's Performance in Combat During the World Wars

In a detailed study commissioned by the US Army and published in 1982, Nancy Loring Goldman produced a balanced assessment addressing the qualitative aspects of women's

World War II combat performance. Recognizing the complexity of the question, Goldman's paper offers some thoughtful suggestions about how the historical record might best be interpreted.

Recognizing that the high praise which women earned from commanders and others was no doubt well deserved, Goldman also cautions that "pious praise heaped upon fighting women is (also) the result of appreciation for what was perceived as performance beyond the call of duty. . . praise that the unusual often evokes." (2:15)

She also notes that while enemy sources (German prisoners and witnesses) sometimes praised women's performance, there were also instances where their abilities were severely scorned. (One must keep in mind here that Germans adamantly opposed using women in military roles, and one would not therefore expect them to praise women's performance in any case.)

Another consideration which must be factored into any assessment must be the recognition that national wartime propaganda can distort the facts. Given these and other reservations, Goldman ultimately concludes that "there is no firm basis on which to measure the fighting worth of women when they have fought in combat in this century." (2:15)

This is probably a fair assessment. While historical experiences of women in the World Wars do offer important insights of which younger generations may be unaware,

available records do not in fact provide enough conclusive evidence to resolve the current debate beyond doubt.

#### Women as Prisoners of War

Much of the current debate about women in combat focuses on the possibility that women might be captured in battle and become prisoners of war (POW). Indeed, Air Force Regulation 35-60 specifically forbids assignment of women to duties where there is "substantial risk of capture." (68:1)

This exclusion begs the question: "Why?" What do we know, if anything, about women in captivity as prisoners of war?

History assures us that women are no strangers to prison camps.

During WW II at Ravensbruck concentration camp alone, over 65,000 allied women died from starvation, disease, the gas chamber, and medical experimentation. (3:9)

Likewise, most historical references tend to ignore the POW experience of 77 American women as a result of American defeats in the battles of Bataan and Corregidor in the Philippines during the early days of World War II. (56:41) The women were US Army nurses, and their experiences in this instance are relevant to combat concerns for which there are no other historical precedents. Captured in May 1942, they remained incarcerated for 37 months--the duration of the war.

Amazingly, these women endured starvation diets.

worked 15-hour (sometimes round-the-clock) days, under constant shelling, in jungle conditions--and survived.(59:8)

A few of the women POWs wrote books about their experiences, but most have chosen to remain silent on the subject. (56:45) Their story does, however, lend credence to the assertion that American women are capable of enduring--and surviving--the considerable stresses of this type of wartime ordeal.

#### Israeli Women: In or Out of Combat?

Considerable confusion exists in the minds of many as to the combat record of the female Israeli soldier. Israeli women have played a significant role in the development of their country's security forces, but their role as combatants has been distorted and often misunderstood. Contributing to the confusion is probably the fact that there has been much internal debate over the proper role of women in Israel's defense forces.

The debate about the extent and nature of their participation is not a development of latter-day history: it has always existed in vigorous polemics among the different groups within the Yishuv (the Jewish population in pre-Israel Palestine) and has continued uninterrupted since the establishment of the state. (17:137)

Women played their most active role in defense from 1941-1951, especially during the War of Independence in 1947. However, they began participating early in the century when the Jews began settling in Palestine and defense units were formed. The first such unit, formed in 1908, had 105

members--20 of which were women. (2:8) Complex struggles ensued against the Arabs, and these units were used in the resulting hostilities into the 1940s. In November 1947, the Jewish state of Israel was established and by December the Jews were embroiled in a war with all of their surrounding Arab neighbors that was to last until March 1949. Now the debates of previous decades were set aside as women were called to defend the fledgling nation.

It was in the Palmach, itself the most active branch of the Yishuv's forces, that women participated closely with men, in the largest numbers, and continued throughout the conflict to fulfill the roles for which they had been trained. Elsewhere, the story was different, changing from relatively full participation early in the conflict toward a more specialized and limited division of labor. (17:149)

By October 1948, women in the military service reached a peak strength of about 12,000. Precise records of their various functions have yet to be fully documented. Non-Palmach women apparently served in more support functions than did Palmach women, who were used in the tank corps armor, artillery, and infantry units, guerilla warfare, street fighting, sniping, and ambush. (2:9)

Overall, Israeli women were evidently quite effective during the war, with an impressive record of achievement to their credit. Yet, as soon as the tide turned in Israel's favor, the women were removed from the fighting and returned to supportive roles. Some claimed that the men were distracted by worrying over the women's safety, but the

actual reasons are not well documented.

It seems, however, that justification for the 1950 decision to order women out of combat was based on more than concern for Jewish opinion or POW risk. Some sources assert that the presence of women made the enemy fight harder. In assessing the reasons why women were ordered out of combat in 1950, one justification given was that "captured Arab troops stated that they would fight to the death rather than suffer dishonor by surrendering to women." (54:118)

Whatever the reason, as soon as the new state of Israel was proclaimed, the controversy about women's role in the military surfaced once again. The Orthodox community expressed grave reservations about the morality of female military service--concerns which continue to be registered to this day.

The Torah prohibits the interchange of functions between men and women: "God has created male and female and designed for each of them a separate task" (Levin 1949: 1446). (53:205)

The most important objection, however, focuses on woman's child-bearing capacity:

"Her function as a mother of 7-8 children on the average is way and above what she could have done in two years of military service. . . . The national service of the observant girls, in their homes and families, is the most important service any Israeli could make, even for the sake of our security. (53:205)

It was ultimately decided in 1949 that women would be removed from combat units, but they were to be made liable to conscription and trained in self-defense. The prevailing



reason for this restriction was the fear that women would be captured by the Arabs and become their prisoners of war. During subsequent wars, women's participation surged, but official policy remained unchanged and they were not allowed to serve at the front.

#### American Women in the Korean and Vietnam Conflicts

In the years following World War II, the numbers of women in the services shrank considerably. Then, after the onset of the Korean War, the services scrambled from 1951 through 1952, without success, to increase women's strength in all of the armed forces from 28,000 to 112,000, finally achieving a level of only 46,000. (20:65) Thus, the only American military women to serve in the Korean War were nurses.

There were probably many reasons for this recruiting failure. but some historians have suggested that American weariness from World War II and the unpopularity of the Korean conflict itself might have contributed. Whatever the reasons, one lesson emerged from this failure which could have a bearing on future limited conflicts fought with an all-volunteer force: talented womanpower for use as reinforcements in a crisis may not be easy to recruit and train on short notice:

The Korean War experience reinforced the lesson that should have been taken from World War II: the mobilization of large numbers of women through volunteer means is not possible. (20:65)

Presuming this to be a reasonable assertion, then the use of women in a combat capacity should be expected to require considerable lead time--both for careful recruitment as well as quality training.

Surprisingly, there is disagreement on the number of American military women who served in Vietnam. One tally runs as high as 20,000, whereas Major General Jeanne Holm, USAF (Ret) published an estimate of only 7,500, indicating that neither the Veterans' Administration nor the Department of Defense had maintained any figures nor any information on the capacities in which they served. (42:82) One thing is certain, however: they did not serve in combat.

The only battles that women were assigned to fight in Vietnam were the paper blizzard battles (freeing young men for active combat duty) and the battles to save lives. By far the majority of women serving in Vietnam were nurses. . . . (42:82)

#### Women in Aviation History

Documentation on women's achievements in aviation history is also not easy to find.

— Even in such aviation-oriented communities as the Air Force, there is little knowledge of women's achievements in aviation. . . . Yet the history of women in aviation is worth examining, and women's achievements in military aviation merit recognition. (67:36)

Women have piloted everything from balloons to space craft, yet in many circles women who have taken to the skies are still regarded as unusual oddities. This section does not lend itself to a complete review of women's achievements

in the history of flight; rather, it is designed to highlight women's activities in military aviation for policymakers who are considering their potential as combat aviators. Women's affiliation with military flight is not a recent phenomenon by any means, yet this still seems to come as something of a surprise to many--even today. Perhaps the surprise is warranted, considering the general lack of encouragement which has been extended to women aviators throughout the years.

During World War I, many well-known female pilots volunteered for military service, but only a few actually got to serve and these were French and Russian women who were permitted to fly in observer and reconnaissance capacities. In the United States, a number of women with outstanding flying records were repeatedly turned down in their bid to become military pilots.

Congressman Murray Hulbert of New York introduced a bill in Congress to permit women to join the Flying Corps and go to France; however, the bill did not pass. Women then found other ways to support the war effort. (67:38)

Stinson Field in San Antonio, Texas was established by a family full of aviators. By the time Katherine Stinson was only 19 years old, she had flown aerial stunts around the world.

In 1917, she set a new world nonstop distance record for both men and women. Her sister Marjorie was a licensed pilot also. The girls taught their brothers, Eddie and Jack, to fly. (67:38)

The boys set up a flight training school at Stinson

Field with their sisters as the principal instructors. Among their students were a group of Canadians who went from training at Stinson to England where they received commissions in the Royal Naval Air Service. There must have been some bitter irony in that for Katherine, who "wanted to enlist as a fighter pilot but was turned down." (67:38) After collecting nearly \$2 million for the Red Cross, Katherine went off to Europe as an ambulance driver, became seriously ill as a result, and never flew again.

Other female pilots of the era, among them Bernetta Miller, Alys McKey Bryant, Helen Hodges, and Ruth Law, met similar rejections in their bids to fly in combat and found other outlets for contributing to the war effort--from working as a canteen volunteer at the front to serving as a test pilot and instructor at home in the US. The closest Ruth Law came to combat was when she "bombed" American cities soliciting for Red Cross donations. (67:39)

During the interlude between the World Wars, women continued to fly, and names like Amelia Earhart, Anne Lindbergh, and Jacqueline Cochran became well known to the public.

Jacqueline Cochran was the driving force behind the establishment of the WASPs, whose contribution to the air effort during World War II was discussed earlier in this chapter.

She made at least two unsuccessful attempts to get General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, Chief of Staff of the Army Air Forces, to establish a group of women pilots in the Army Air Forces, with her as head of the group. Arnold later stated that he had doubts about "whether a slip of a young girl could fight the controls of B-17." (67:41)

Failing in this effort, Cochran recruited 25 experienced American female pilots and took them to England in 1942 to fly for the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), where their services were more welcome. Eventually, when the U.S Army Air Force established the WASPs group, Cochran became its Director. The mission of the WASPs was to ferry aircraft from manufacturers or depots to operational bases in the US--not to Europe as is commonly assumed.

On 17 June 1941, Cochran did fly a bomber to England. However, when male ferry pilots learned of this proposed flight, they threatened a strike. Thus, Cochran was permitted to make the flight only after she agreed to relinquish the controls of the aircraft to copilot Captain Grafton Carlisle during takeoff and landing. In September 1943, Nancy Love and Betty Gillies were scheduled to ferry a B-17 to Prestwick, Scotland, but when they reached Goose Bay, the flight was canceled by direction of General Arnold. Arnold had ordered that no women fly transoceanic planes until he had time to study and approve the matter; he never approved such flights. (67:43)

By 1944, this same General Arnold unsuccessfully championed congressional approval of full military recognition for the WASPs, who had flown everything in the Army Air Corps inventory and established an outstanding flying record.

. . . their safety record was better than that of male pilots flying similar missions. They lost less time for reasons of physical disability than did their male

colleagues. (67:44)

Excellent flying records were also established by British women, who flew all 120 different types of aircraft in the British inventory during their service with the aforementioned ATA. Likewise, the achievements of Soviet women, who did get to prove themselves in combat, were significant:

One female fighter regiment carried out 4419 combat missions and the women's 587th night bomber regiment flew 25,000 combat sorties. (67:44)

In the 4 decades since World War II, American women remained limited in what they were permitted to do in military aviation. The most restrictive period, oddly enough, occurred during the 29 years which followed the creation of the US Air Force in 1947, when memories of the WASP contribution were still fresh. During these 3 decades, military women were restricted from serving in rated duties in all Air Force aircraft. It was not until 1976 that the ban was partially lifted and Air Force women entered Undergraduate Pilot Training. Navigator training was opened to female officers in 1977. (63:38) Ironically, this was the same year that Congress passed Senator Barry Goldwater's bill to accord full military status to the WASPs--". . .to provide recognition. . . for the service to their country during World War II." (67:44) By 1978, enlisted women were offered their first opportunity to serve as aircrew members. (63:38)

As of January 1987, 306 of 21,448 Air Force pilots (1.4 percent) were women, and 126 of 9,065 Air Force navigators (1.4 percent) were women. (62:1)

While Federal Statute still restricts women from flying combat aircraft, they are now piloting a variety of combat support aircraft, which would bring them closer and closer to the battlefields of the future, much to the chagrin of critics. In 1982, women were assigned to the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS); the KC-10 tanker aircraft opened to women in 1984; and in 1986, the RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft and some additional EC-130 electronic countermeasures aircraft missions became available to women. (63:28)

For some reason, women seem to have been more readily accepted as normal members of space crews. In June 1987, while introducing a bill that would permit Air Force female members to receive fighter pilot training, Senator DeConcini noted how well women astronauts had been integrated into the nation's space program:

Sally Ride, Judith Resnick, and Christa McAuliffe became synonymous with the U.S. aerospace program and were intimately involved in all of the rigorous aspects of the space shuttle program. (37:88396)

As early as 1978, when Sally Ride became the first Western woman to venture into space, women already comprised 13.6 percent of the most key operational positions in the U.S. space program: "Dr. Sally Ride was one of six women in

an American team of 15 pilots and 29 mission specialists."  
(19:199)

Subsequent performances by woman astronauts dispel any doubt that Dr Ride's initial flight might have been a token gesture by NASA's space officials:

In 1984 Challenger was sent into orbit with both Dr Sally Ride and Dr Kathryn Sullivan. . . on board. A year later, yet another American woman astronaut, Dr Rhea Seddon, was one of a team of seven on space shuttle Discovery. . . . There were two American women in the crew of seven who were killed in the major space disaster in 1987. Judith Reznick, as a crew member, received little publicity either before or after the Challenger was launched. . . on its fated mission. . . . It was Christa McAuliffe, the first "ordinary member of the public" in space, who was the center of attention. Mrs. McAuliffe was not a token woman: she was a token person, chosen from thousands of applicants of both sexes as President Reagan's ideal representative of twentieth century America. (19:200)

Another recent case where a woman was accepted without sensational comment was in the non-stop flight around the world of the Voyager just before Christmas 1986. The pilots, Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager, gained national acclaim for the 9-day, 26,000-mile circumnavigation in a state-of-the-art craft that imposed enormous demands on its pilots:

. . . Voyager could easily have become a flying bomb had anything gone remotely wrong. With a wing span greater than that of a Boeing 727, it weighed only 2,000 lbs. and carried nearly four times its weight in fuel, stored in seventeen tanks in the wings and fuselage. (19:202)

That the feat required skill, stamina, and courage is beyond doubt. But what distinguished Jeana Yeager's pioneering experience from those of her female predecessors



was that her achievement, rather than her sex, was the focus of public attention.

Although the project was aggressively marketed and had enthusiastic media coverage, there was no emphasis on the fact that one of the pilots was a woman, and Jeana did not receive any particular individual attention. (19:202)

The suggestion that women pilots are no longer as newsworthy as they once were was again reinforced by the low-key way in which both the American military and press handled reporting on the involvement of women in US military operations in Grenada and Libya.

#### American Military Women in Grenada and Libya

During January and February 1986--more than 2 years after the fact--the Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and Long Island Newsday all carried bit items reporting that the Air Force had used an estimated two dozen women to "airlift troops and supplies into Grenada while U.S. forces were engaged in combat with Cuban forces at the Point Salines Airport." (60:31) None of the reports took exception to the Air Force claim that the law had not been violated. Instead, the papers questioned "whether the law itself has become unrealistic for today's armed forces, all of which place similar restrictions on the use of women in combat." (61:32) Also considered newsworthy was the comment of a male pilot who flew to Grenada, quoted by the Los Angeles Times reporter:

"The significant thing is that they went in, did the job alongside us, came out and nobody made a huge fuss about it. Nobody, as far as I know made a special effort to include them and nobody thought for a moment about excluding women. It simply was no big deal. For the guys or the women. That's the way it should be."  
(11:36)

In October 1987, the St Louis Dispatch carried a story similar in tone, noting that Army women served as military police and as helicopter crew chiefs in the 1983 Grenada invasion and that in the 1986 air attacks on Libya, Air Force women flew in tankers that refueled the F-111 fighter-bombers. The paper again questioned the wisdom of excluding women from combat roles, noting that "official policies carefully crafted in peacetime are quickly discarded during the press of battle." (49:2c)

By contrast, when Senator John Warner singled out the seven women who participated in the raid on Libya for special praise, he was surprised by the mixed reviews he received from organized women's groups, some of whom charged that releases such as the Senator's were no longer relevant.  
(30:16)

In fact, a total of seven women (six officers and one enlisted) served in the Libyan raid.

One of the women was a backup pilot on a KC-135 tanker, and four served as copilots--three on KC-10s and one on a KC-135. A female staff officer who served as a mission planner flew aboard a KC-135. The enlisted woman served as a boom operator. (30:16)

Events in Grenada and Libya have special significance for future trends. Three points should be made. First, none

of the reporting on the use of women was negative--except in suggesting that the law is unrealistic and unnecessarily hampers the service in the use of skilled women. Second, the reports reflected the same matter-of-fact tone that was evident in the reports filed on the women astronauts and Voyager pilot Jeana Yeager. Third, these women--like the others--got the job done.

#### An International Perspective on Women in Modern Combat

A review of the laws and policies governing use of women in combat in nations around the world lends perspective to the issue. This section examines current practices for utilization of military women in countries other than the United States.

#### Combat Status of Soviet Women

In light of the almost legendary exploits of Soviet World War II women veterans, it comes as something of a surprise to learn that comparatively few women are employed in the Soviet Armed Forces today. From their prominent role in the Great Patriotic War, women now constitute a negligible portion of the military establishment, and their roles have been greatly diminished.

Curiously, however, women members are very seldom, if ever, seen. . . . Are there any in fact at all? Yes--about 10,000 of them, but that amounts to a miniscule 2% of the total five million Soviet Armed Forces personnel. (46:380)

Other estimates indicate the number might go as high as

30,000, but the key point is that all of the jobs offered to women are of the noncombat variety. Some reports indicate that the Soviet Union has recently appeared to be mounting "a fairly extensive media campaign to recruit more women. . ."

(20:69) This could be due to the pressures of the Afghanistan campaign, but combat is still out for Soviet women these days and there are no indications that this will change in the near future. Most women serve in enlisted ranks, and all are volunteers. (55:iv)

#### Combat Status of Israeli Women

The Israeli military is "the only force in the world to require full conscription for both men and women," but it "has erroneously been looked on as the true example of equality of the sexes in the military." (64:69) Israeli women are drafted as enlisted personnel at the age of 18 for 24 months. (64:70) In actuality, exemptions such as marriage, pregnancy, religious convictions, and lack of education keep approximately 40 percent of all age-eligible women from entering military service. (21:105)

Today, women serve in auxiliary and noncombat duties. Their role is designed to enable them to fill jobs that would free men for field duties. This is not to say that they serve in predominantly secretarial duties. Their jobs extend well beyond stereotypical "women's work:"

They teach male recruits how to fly supersonic jet fighters, how to march, how to strip down submachine guns, and how to operate tanks, huge artillery pieces

and computerized rocket launchers. (50:66)

Brigadier General Amira Dotan, head of the women's division of the Israeli Defense Forces, discussed the current noncombatant status of the women in a 1986 interview:

"Women soldiers are fully trained to fight, but they are kept away from the combat zones. Israeli society--and Jews abroad--would not accept female casualties or the risk of women being taken prisoner of war, particularly by the Syrians." (50:67)

#### Combat Status of Women in NATO Nations

Twelve of the sixteen nations that comprise the NATO Alliance have women in their military forces. (Iceland, Italy, Spain, and Luxembourg are the exceptions.) Germany and Turkey have only women officers in their forces. (28:59) Portugal has only a small contingent of officer and enlisted female nurses in its Air Force.

The only NATO nations that have laws in effect which bar women from combat are the United States, Turkey, France, and West Germany.

The other nations which bar women from combat (Great Britain, Canada, and Denmark) are doing so as a result of service policy vice legal constraint. (36:18) Both Denmark and Canada have experiments underway which allow women to serve in selected combat units. These are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Women are now totally integrated into the armed forces of Belgium, where women comprised 5.8 percent of the total force as of 1986. (28:60) "Both Royal and Ministerial

decrees allow women to participate in all aspects of military service, including combat." (48:92)

Sources were in disagreement with regard to whether or not combat service is now authorized for Greek women. The numbers involved at this point are not high. As of 1986, women comprised less than one percent of the total force. However, this would quickly change if the country were mobilized.

In accordance with Greek Law, Greek females aged 20 to 32, when called up, are obliged to enlist for service in the Armed Forces. However, this compulsory enlistment is envisaged only in war time or on mobilization. (28:28)

Norwegian women have been taking part in defense activities since 1889, and in November 1984 the Norwegian Parliament made it official and ruled that women could serve in combat roles in Norway's armed forces. Men are conscripted and women join as volunteers. Both sexes are employed on equal terms according to qualifications, and all training is fully integrated. (28:35) Although the U.S. Marines did not assign women to the Lebanon peacekeeping mission, Norway assigned about 150 women to Lebanon beginning in 1978. (29:40)

Dutch women have served in the Netherlands Armed Forces since 1944, and general legal regulations have been the same for men and women since January 1979, including combat roles. Compulsory national service applies solely to men, however. There are no restrictions on the assignment of

women, yet the services take a practical approach in the utilization of women to account for special differences.

In the Navy no women are posted to the Marine Corps or to submarines because of the very high physical requirements in these branches and the need to ensure privacy of both men and women. . . . Although the Army does not exclude women from any post, women are not expected to be able to meet the very heavy physical demands. . . applicable to the infantry, cavalry and engineers. A few may be able to satisfy the requirements of. . . (the artillery). The other arms and branches. . . (have requirements). . . which can be met by men and women. . . . The Air Force provides equal opportunities in all respects for both sexes and women are capable of meeting the requirements set. (28:32-33)

This approach seems to be borne out in practice. In December 1986, a Dutch woman became NATO's first female combat pilot when she graduated from Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas. After graduation, 23-year old Nelly Speerstra was assigned to an F-16 squadron in her country. (40:45)

#### Combat Experiments by NATO Nations

Although both Canada and Denmark have had long-standing policies barring women from combat, both nations recently waived their restrictions on an experimental basis in selected units in order to test the feasibility of assigning women to combat jobs.

Denmark tested about 160 women in Naval combat roles during a 4 to 5-year trial period in the 1980s. As a result, the Danish government announced in December 1986 that it was permitting women to volunteer for naval combat duty as

gunners and navigators on torpedo boats and minesweepers. (39:44-45) The restrictions regarding service aboard submarines, in naval air, and as frogmen would remain in force. (69:23) USA Today reported in October 1987 that "Denmark found that women in combat roles were more highly motivated than men and often outperformed them." (10:2A)

In 1987 Denmark began a second test of volunteer women in Army and Air Force combat positions. Fifty Army women gunners will be observed in tank, armored-infantry, front-line field artillery, and air-defense units. In the Air Force, 77 women will be tested in missile squadrons and defense units "but will not fly fighters or fire missiles." (43:21)

Denmark's tests are of great interest to other NATO nations because they, like Denmark, are facing declining birthrates which will make it extremely difficult to keep front-line regiments up to strength if only males are allowed to serve. (43:22)

Because of the numbers involved, Canada's test program may prove to be of greater significance to interested observers in the US. As of 1986, the 7,400 women serving in the Canadian Armed Forces comprised 8.9 percent of their military; of the NATO nations, only the US had a higher figure--with 9.5 percent. (41:47)

The Canadian Defence Department is conducting the experiment, which commenced in late 1987, to study mixed-gender combat units on a long-term basis (probably for a period of 4 years) to determine what effect women would have



on the nation's combat capabilities. In making the announcement, a senior military spokesman explained that the experiment was being undertaken because the Canadian public and members of Parliament had already expressed support for women in combat--in theory. The test will allow "women for the first time. . . to serve in positions in any combat unit, ship or aircraft of the Canadian Forces for the duration of the study." (24:19)

The plan involves recruiting about 500 women (90 percent of the number of volunteers specifically needed for the study) and selecting the other remaining 10 percent from women already on active duty.

Training will be integrated and qualification standards will remain the same. Currently, some career specialties have different strength entrance standards, based on sex, because women are prohibited from field duties. If the test results in lifting those prohibitions, then one possible outcome is that fewer women--rather than more--will be able to meet the broader entrance requirements of certain career fields. (24:19)

This is not the first time that Canada has performed testing of this nature. In 1979, the Canadian forces conducted a 5-year trial program which tested women's performance in "nontraditional environments and roles." As a result, a number of new non-combat jobs were opened to

Canada's women. (41:47) One observer, considering that earlier effort, wrote:

It is the great virtue of the Canadian experiment, however, that the CF have felt it was not enough to judge matters impressionistically, or on the basis of traditional assumptions, but to test and measure performance, and few armed services are making such a serious effort to tackle the issue. (51:47)

Perhaps the same might be said of Canada's newest experimental undertaking.

#### Combat Status of Women in Other Nations

Australia still exempts women from combat roles, but there are indications that attitudes about women are changing towards equality and their increased participation in the workforce as well as in more nontraditional jobs.

Australia has signed four United Nations conventions, and ratified two, pertaining to equality of opportunity for women and the removal of discrimination against women. Until now, Australia has sought to exempt itself, on defence force employment, from such conventions. Whether she will continue to do so will depend on how the Government assesses the national will on the question of women in combat. (27:26)

Austria has no women in its small military; and Brazil only recently introduced women in 1981 and still restricts them to certain limited functions within the Air Force and the Navy. (1:23)

In war-torn El Salvador, however, female soldiers began combat training in 1985 for integration as replacements in previously all-male units.

Despite a long tradition of male machismo in their country, female soldiers are being trained to take a giant social leap forward into the very front lines of

their country's continuing war against communism. . . .  
That puts Salvadoran female soldiers strides ahead of  
their female counterparts in the U.S. (55:67)

The results of that experiment, which was reported in 1985,  
have apparently not yet been published, but promise to shed  
new light on the issue once the data is available.

Finnish women may volunteer only for noncombat duty  
in Finland's armed forces, and the same holds true for  
Swedish women interested in serving in the Swedish defense  
forces. (48:92-93) Likewise, Swiss women serve in logistics,  
communications, and administrative functions in Switzerland's  
Army, but they are not armed and not assigned to combat.  
(1:24)

Women have served in the armed forces of Zaire since  
1966 but comprise only one percent of the Zairian military.  
Zaire's policy is "totally nondiscriminatory" but in practice  
women do not serve in combat:

In principle, women are subject to the same regime as  
men. However, as the result of war customs, women are  
never sent to the front. . . . Zairian women military  
personnel can accede to all functions within the Zairian  
Armed Forces, but in practice, they are not yet prepared  
for certain duties. (1:24)

In Malaysia, women have been performing non-combat  
duties in Malaysian Army infantry units, as well as in  
signals, medical, transport, and military police units. The  
Malaysians are quick to point out that no distinctions are  
drawn between the men and women in their military police  
force. The women, like the men, receive compulsory training

in unarmed combat after serving 1 year with their units. Apparently, the women are doing all right in "what was at one time a hesitant trial (that) has become a resounding success. . . and it is hoped that one-third of the military police force will be women." (66:50)

#### Women Guerrillas in Non-European Areas

Women appear to have taken an active part in the Cuban Revolution; in fact, one woman was said to be Castro's second-in-command. Today, Cuban women train with weapons, but "their main responsibility seems to be as teachers in rural areas." (59:9) Women have also joined guerrilla groups in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela--and paid the price for participation by being tortured and jailed for their resistance activities. (59:9)

According to Kinzer, there is no doubt that women did fight in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia but hard data about them is sparse. (59:10)

Just about anyone who served in Southeast Asia has either seen or heard of women fighting with the men. Like the other Communist countries, when it comes to combat, their women have an equal role. (16:43)

Another author notes that women have turned up in the ranks of various Middle Eastern terrorist squads, during the Philippine uprisings of the early seventies, and in Eire's IRA, which is always thought of as an all-male organization.

As oldtimer IRA soldier Seamus Twomey chuckled through his beer in Belfast recently, "Women? Why, they are our backbone. They're a hard, tough lot. No one in our Army (IRA) used the word 'order' around them. It's always

'request.' They do their share and more. (16:58)

#### Observations

The historical information provided here is designed to provide a basic orientation about the scope and parameters of women's experiences in combat and war around the world, basically for those leaders who need to acquire a better understanding of the complex dimensions of this issue. In some cases, history can provide helpful precedents and insights; in other cases, the record is vague indeed.

The objective here was not to perpetuate misleading myths but, rather, to dispel exaggerated notions while ensuring credit was given where due. In cases where research materials were in conflict, an attempt was made to represent both sides so as not to further distort a particular point.

History does not objectively tell us much about how effective women were in war, but it does indicate clearly when, where, and how they were employed in battle--and what some people thought about how they performed, both pro and con. It lets us know that women were most often used in combat when the homeland was seriously threatened and when male resources were depleted or low in numbers to begin with. It also clarifies, to some degree, the extent to which women fought. In modern history, they have always been a minority group in combat service.

It may be, as Kinzer noted, that not using women as fighting soldiers is a cultural tradition of stable nations,

and that to admit that women must be used as combatants "implies a nation in decadence." (59:10) The predominance of traditional roles for international military women does indeed suggest that this is still a prevailing view around the world.

However, the status of women in the military is shaped as much by public opinion as it is by the military forces which employ them. Today, we see serious efforts aimed at exploring the issue through experimental testing programs and note that a number of nations are reexamining and gradually liberalizing their existing policies.

While these events should not be taken to mean that combat roles for women are gaining widespread acceptance, they certainly do signal that a serious debate now exists where there was once no question about women's "rightful place." The next chapter focuses on the nature of that debate as it is evolving today in the United States.

## CHAPTER VI

### AMERICAN ATTITUDES ABOUT WOMEN IN COMBAT

Is the American outlook and philosophy right at the moment sufficiently liberal to accommodate the utilization of American women in combat? Many feel certain that it is not, whereas numerous others firmly maintain that American society is ready for this change.

One thing is certain: a clear and general consensus on this issue has not yet emerged. This chapter reviews the debate as it is evolving today by examining some of the forums through which American opinions find expression. Opinion polls, Congressional legislation and discussion, and the published viewpoints of special interest groups, military men, and women themselves are all helping to shape the debate about American women as combatants.

#### The Congressional Debate

Nowhere is the diversity of opinion so evident as in the American Congress, where members wrestle with two competing demands. One demand is to maintain a credible military in an all-volunteer era; toward this end, increased use of women is an appealing solution to some and an appalling option to others. The second demand is to enact legislation consistent with cultural values--easier said than done, given the wide range of opinions about the role of women in modern American society.

Over 40 years ago, Congress passed legislation that rendered half of the American population ineligible for service in the critical combat ranks of the nation's Navy and Air Force. The Army followed suit and established an exclusion policy reflecting the intent of Congress. There was debate, but the legislation has held up with little serious challenge over the years.

Today the situation is not so simple: new legislation to withdraw the combat exclusion is an attractive option in some ways. It could significantly expand the pool of military eligibles while simultaneously appealing to the growing demand in American society for more and better career opportunities for women. But there is a twofold catch: foremost is the fear that such a change would seriously weaken the military forces and perhaps jeopardize national security. Added to this concern is the firm traditional view, still held by many but not a majority of voters, that the battlefield is not a proper place for a woman.

Perhaps because of the widespread disagreement, Congress did not consider the issue of women's roles in the military throughout the decade--not until 1987. In that year, several bills were introduced which rekindled discussion of the matter. The nature of the situation is such that it has caused legislators to seek middle ground on an issue that does not lend itself well to compromise: after



all, one is either in or out of combat--there is no in-between in wartime. Unfortunately, this approach has clouded the real issue and further confused the public. Nevertheless, legislators have persisted in efforts to appease both sides, as the dialogue over current pending legislation illustrates.

Three senators and one house representative proposed legislation in 1987 that, as of this writing, still awaits action by Congress. Summaries of the bills follow.

In February 1987, Senators Proxmire, D.-Wis., and Cohen, R.-Maine, submitted a bill (S581) that would open more combat support jobs to women. (93:S2410) In the Air Force, this would mean that the rest of the reconnaissance, training, and transport planes would become open to women. The bill would open to Navy women jobs on support ships that in turn service naval battle groups with supplies, and Army women could be assigned to all direct combat support units.

It does not require an in-depth analysis to realize that this bill would dramatically increase women's probability of engaging in combat. For example, an Air Force female piloting a reconnaissance aircraft to assess the damage caused by a fighter strike would in all probability draw fire from an angered enemy, as would Navy and Army women operating land and sea lifeline support at the forward edge of battle.

Yet Senator Proxmire, one of Congress's most outspoken advocates of women in the military, described the

bill as "a moderate one" that does not conflict with the combat exclusion laws. (47:9) The Senator said, however, that he believed public support for women in direct combat already exists. (23:12) Senator Cohen expressed doubt that such public support currently exists, or that legislation to drop the exclusion would have a chance of passage, but he said that he would support eliminating the restrictions eventually "after a period of education, and trial and error and evolution." (23:12)

Army and Air Force officials told the Air Force Times that they opposed the bill "because it tries to give a blanket definition of combat without addressing the statutory combat restrictions on women." (23:12)

Therein lies the dilemma. There are those in Congress today who are clearly not satisfied with the old combat exclusion law and want to give the military more assignment flexibility, yet they apparently do not sense enough support to warrant mounting a direct attack on the exclusion law itself. The result is legislation that "waffles" around the issue, rather than addressing it directly.

By summer of 1987, the "round-about" approach gained momentum when Representative Dickinson, R.-Ala., introduced a bill (HR2719) in the House identical to the Proxmire-Cohen Senate bill. (94:H5308) An aide to the conservative

congressman said, "He decided the issue made sense because we are talking about letting women into combat-support systems, not combat itself." (15:4)

The support of Dickinson, a conservative Republican, removes any feeling that the legislation is being pushed just by feminists and liberals, said congressional aides and military officials who have followed women's issues. (15:4)

The third and final piece of legislation introduced in 1987 really distorted--and skirted--the issue. It was a bill (S1398) by Senator DeConcini, D.-Ariz., that would alter Title 10 of the U.S Code just enough to give the Air Force Secretary the authority to permit women to undergo fighter pilot training. (37:S8396)

Prompted by the news that Dutch Air Force Lieutenant Nelly Speerstra had just graduated from F-16 training at Sheppard AFB, Texas, Senator DeConcini introduced the bill so American women could have the same opportunity. The significant difference, of course, was that Lieutenant Speerstra was subsequently assigned to a fighter squadron in her own country, where she was fully authorized to engage in combat, should the need arise.

Senator DeConcini, however, adamantly opposed combat roles for women at the time he introduced his bill, saying, "I want it understood that I continue to believe that women should not be placed in combat situations and that they should not be drafted." (22:1)

In effect, DeConcini's bill would put the Air Force

into situations where it would be training fighter pilots that could not fight. The proposal focused squarely on the issue of equal opportunity rather than women in combat and seemed surprisingly oblivious to the practical needs of the Air Force.

These legislative proposals are significant for several reasons--regardless of their ultimate disposition. First, they represent renewed Congressional interest in the appropriate utilization of military women--a subject which has been dormant for some years now. Second, they do not directly challenge the old combat exclusion law, indicating that there is not a strong ground swell of opinion in the offing that would force a change anytime soon. Third, they expose curious contradictions that suggest there will be some reexaminations of the 40-year old law to ensure it still serves the nation's best interests in waging modern warfare and continues to be compatible with present day American values.

This is not an easy issue for the American national legislature. After all, miscalculating the national will could be disastrous--both politically and militarily. Although there is no consensus on what the will of Congress currently is on the issue of women in combat, the matter is definitely drawing increased attention on Capitol Hill and will probably gain momentum with time.

### American Public Opinion

It should come as no surprise that American lawmakers are divided and somewhat befuddled by the combat issue; they are, after all, but a reflection of the diversity of opinion that exists nationwide on this controversial subject. The degree and extent of that diversity of opinion is difficult to measure because "combat" in the modern context means different things to different people and the issue almost always evokes a wide variety of emotional responses that are anything but logical.

Indeed, few Americans seem to be interested in reasoning about this issue, even those who sometimes must do so. Those who ordinarily oppose all female exclusion often beg off by saying no one, male or female, should have to engage in combat. Others wonder that there can be serious debate about legislating women's presence in or absence from combat when circumstances, not lawmakers, so often determine who participates in that regularly occurring activity. (5:288-289)

Many Americans had serious doubts about employing women in the military during World War II. When the Army had difficulty recruiting women for the new women's corps, some offered the explanation that if women were aware of how much they were needed, they would volunteer. Yet, a mid-1943 Gallup poll of military-eligible women and their parents revealed that 86 percent were aware of the need. Why, then, were women reluctant to respond?

The major reasons appeared to be apathy, fear of Army life (too physically rigorous and regimented), misunderstanding of the jobs Army women held (almost one-third thought kitchen police was the main one), negative attitudes of relatives and friends, and perceived Army

opposition to the new women's corps. (20:61)

No doubt another strong influence that discouraged women from joining were the influential men in their lives:

In a similar vein, a different poll of Army men conducted several months earlier reported that only 25 percent of the men said they would advise a sister or girlfriend to join the women's corps, 35 percent were undecided, and the remaining 40 percent said they would not advise a sister or girlfriend to do so. (20:61)

Added to these negative social inputs, was a widespread slander campaign about the alleged low morals and scandalous behavior of women soldiers. In response to this, the Army conducted an investigation which found the rumors to be groundless, but the damage was done and the effect "on efforts to recruit women and to maintain morale among the women currently in the Army was chilling." (20:62)

Social values about women in the military have improved considerably since 1943. There is no shortage of top quality women waiting to enter today's Air Force, and they are joining without the impetus of a national wartime emergency. Their reasons for joining sound surprisingly similar to the reasons given by young men: they have the ability to do the job and they are looking for an opportunity to serve their country. American parents these days tend to be more supportive of daughters who choose military careers, but it remains to be seen whether or not all this would change if women became eligible for combat.

Public opinion polls shed some light on how Americans

view the combat question today, but Major General Jeanne Holm, USAF (Ret.) has cautioned that the way in which polls present the idea to Americans has a lot to do with how they respond:

"When you use the term combat, people have the image of a woman fighting hand-to-hand combat with an enemy, but today's conflicts aren't really like that," Holm said. "Several years ago the Rand Corporation had a survey that asked how the American public felt about the women in combat. When the question was asked generally, a majority of respondents said women shouldn't be in combat. But when asked whether women should serve on missile launch crews, on combat ships and as fighter pilots, the majority of respondents said they felt women should be allowed to do those jobs." (8:30)

The General's observation seems to be borne out by the results of a 1982 survey by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, which offers data that should be of interest to the Air Force. In that poll, 62 percent of respondents said women should be allowed to fly jet fighter aircraft; 35 percent said they could engage in hand-to-hand combat. (10:2A)

There are also indications that the media is picking up on the issue as a subject for renewed debate. In January 1988, USA Today devoted an entire editorial page to the subject. Entitling the feature, "The Debate: Women in Combat," the paper published their own editorial opinion together with the opinions of four guest columnists, as well as a random sampling of divergent "voices from across the USA." In its own commentary, the paper advocated dropping the combat exclusion, noting some ironies in the way things

currently stand:

A woman can serve in a supply unit, where she's exposed to enemy fire, but she can't serve in the infantry. A woman can serve on a destroyer-tender, but not on a destroyer. A woman pilot can deliver supplies to an aircraft carrier, but she can't serve on a carrier. Does this make sense? (34:10A)

Air Force female pilots and navigators indicate that many individuals both in military and civilian sectors still consider women who fly aircraft in the 1980s as curiosities. (67:35-36) When women reentered military flight programs in the 1970s, there was considerable media interest--despite the small number of women involved and the limited nature of their flying roles:

Even the Air Force Times was guilty of some sensationalism in its article titled, "Dangers to Female Pilots to be Checked on Planes," yet the only problem the article identified was the flight suits and boots (designed for men, of course) were too large for women! Surely not a very serious problem nor a difficult one to solve. (67:36)

Despite the progress of the present, old attitudes die hard. One amusing, but insightful, piece of social commentary perhaps best sums up the confusion that many are experiencing today as roles for women expand. It was provided in 1986 by a female Air Force C-141 pilot who was carrying military dependents on her flight. One passenger was 4-year old boy, who was invited up to the cockpit to see what was going on. "He looked at me," she recalled, "and asked: 'How come the stewardess is flying the airplane?'" (11:39)



### Special Interest Group Pressures

There are several groups in the United States whose views on the combat issue regularly receive a fair share of public exposure. This section introduces the most prominent of those influencers and briefly addresses their current positions on the subject.

The most well known group is the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, better known as "DACOWITS," which was established in 1951 by the Secretary of Defense to assist in the recruitment and retention of servicewomen. As Secretary of Defense appointees, DACOWITS members are considered "Code 4," (which is equivalent to a Lieutenant General). (26:1) The 34-member committee is composed of civilian men and women representing a wide cross section of career fields and geographic locations. Members serve 3-year terms.

The issue of women in combat is one that has sometimes divided DACOWITS. The group has instead elected to work within the parameters of the combat exclusion law, and has concentrated its efforts on removing unnecessary barriers to women in the service, rather than on removing the exclusion provisions.

Despite its "soft" stance on combat, DACOWITS has gone on record with a sharp reaction to what it sees as an unwarranted reluctance to utilize military women more

effectively:

...in a letter to Secretary of Defense Weinberger, the Chairperson of DACOWITS questioned "the merit of the continual studying of women's military participation. As a study reaffirms the positive performance and contribution by those of our gender, a new one seems to be ordered. This finally raises the question of whether objectivity or the 'right answers' is the purpose."  
(25:30)

Another group which takes a special interest in the combat issue is the Committee on Women in the NATO Forces. Originally organized by the Danish Atlantic Association in 1961, membership has grown over the years to about 60 representatives from 13 NATO countries.

The aim of the committee is to collate information on the status of women in the NATO member countries and to examine future possibilities and prospects for the employment of women within the military forces of the Alliance. (109:5)

Women in combat is a regular agenda item for this group. The Committee's current position, set in 1973, is that "women should be used in all military specialties, but not in combat unless required for the nation's security."  
(29:40)

The third and last group to take a particular interest in the combat issue is a private organization, headquartered in Washington, DC, called the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL). WEAL specializes in women's economic issues but sponsors a Women in the Military Project which pays close attention to the combat issue and other items

pertaining to military women. This group has been more outspoken than the previous two groups in opposing the combat exclusion provision. Carolyn Becraft, Director of the Women in the Military Project, made WEAL's position clear when she said, "Exclusion keeps women from career advancement and leads to their treatment as second-class soldiers."

(10:2A)

#### Women's Views

The views of women are split on this issue. Many Americans, including women, are culturally conditioned to believe that national defense is a man's job. In keeping with that conditioning, even the former Director of the WASPs, Jaqueline Cochran, objected to the idea of women in combat, saying that it violated her "personal conception of women's proper role in society." (31:72)

There are plenty of women in this day and age who openly object to women being eligible for combat roles.

Author Phyllis Schlafly has been an emotional and outspoken opponent of the idea, labelling female officers as "the most selfish, uncaring, mean-spirited class of people in the country today" and asserting that:

If the men in the U.S. armed services are too wimpish to stand up to the foolish feminists and their unnatural demands, how can we count on our armed services to stand up to the Russians? (35:10A)

Jean Yarbrough, a political science professor at Loyola University in Chicago, presented her case against

women in combat in an article that attracted widespread attention in 1985. She fully intended to bring the subject into the forefront when she presented her argument.

"My purpose was to spark some kind of public debate about whether this is indeed that direction in which we, as a nation, wish to move. The general public is not really aware of what's happening in the military. There's been silence on this issue for the last five years. . . . person-to-person, men are, on the whole, more violent than women. Certainly there are exceptions, but I don't think you ought to run the Army on exceptions." (31:41-42)

Yarbrough's views were countered by retired Air Force Major General Jeanne Holm, who accused the professor of faulty reasoning:

"She throws out this emotional term 'combat' without defining what on earth she means. I don't know of any rational person today who advocates women in the infantry, for example. They would hardly stand a chance." (32:42)

General Holm went on to add that she saw no problem with women flying Air Force jet fighters or serving on Navy warships.

This, then, briefly characterizes the debate that is being waged between women, as well as men. Clearly, there is no consensus here. But what about the young women currently on active duty who would be asked to do combat, should the law be reversed? How do they feel?

Perhaps no single group expresses more frustration with the restrictions than military women themselves.

"Don't train me for a job and then tell me I can't do it because I'm female. That's a waste of the taxpayers' money--and a waste of my time," says Lt. Diane Mills,

air-weapons director in an AWACS unit at Tinker AFB in Oklahoma, trained to direct fighters to intercept enemy aircraft using computers on board E-3 radar planes. . . . "It is mission-essential that the people who train together go together in a combat situation," agrees Maj. Iris Hageney, who oversees maintenance for a fleet of F-15 fighters. . . . Even women who are not eager for combat duty feel it is impossible to contain casualties to the front lines--or even to contain the front--in modern warfare.  
(33:37)

Air Force Captain Debra Dubbe, who served on an AC-130 refueling tanker during the Grenada invasion said that she saw "no difference in women or men taking risks--or dying."

Dubbe, 28, a member of the Air force Academy's first male-female graduating class in 1980, is now a navigation instructor. She placed her hand on her heart, as if taking an oath. "I signed up to be an officer, and if that means having to die, that's what I agreed to do."  
(10:2A)

#### Military Men's Views

Women served in every theater of operations during World War II, but when they arrived at their new assignments the "initial reception often ranged from till-hell-freezes-over opposition to the milder, 'Good Lord, what am I going to do with you?'" (4:56) As the women got on with their duties, however, initial resistance faded.

Requests from the field for more Wacs poured in at such a rate that the Army estimated a need for over a million women to meet the demand, a flattering tribute that defied the feasibility of training so many. (4:57)

These days, such initial reactions probably occur much less frequently--especially in the traditional career fields, but the question of how men would react if women were

sent to reinforce their ranks in combat is still unanswered.

There are many reasons why some military men do not favor placing women in combat roles; a number of the specific objections were reviewed in an earlier chapter. One key concern, however, merits further discussion here--and that is the POW argument. Current Air Force policy precludes assignment of women to duties where there is a substantial risk of capture (together with a high probability of exposure to hostile fire). Some commanders are deadly serious when they argue that women in a prisoner of war camp would mean trouble:

An extension of the POW argument offered by some commanders is that they not only wish to avoid the ravishing of women but that they also worry about how such ravishment would affect the judgment of military commanders. Further, some worry that the likelihood of public anguish, were women made POWs, is good and sufficient cause for keeping them out of combat altogether. (5:291)

Another factor that may impact on men's opinions about how women would fare in combat was postulated by a sociologist who described the negative effects caused by the overwhelmingly skewed sex ratio in the Army.

. . . as members of the majority male group exaggerate differences between themselves and the minority female group, social differences between the two groups becomes more rigid, and assimilation is thwarted. Finally, because their numbers are so few and their isolation from the dominant male Army culture is so great, women soldiers tend to be viewed by their male peers, superiors, and subordinates less as unique individuals and more as common female stereotypes. (20:71)

Regarding this problem, Major General Jeanne Holm,

USAF (Ret.) added another possible dimension:

"Deep down there's this feeling that women who join the military are asking for it. . . . There's still this feeling that this is a man's Army. I don't think that's going to go away for a long time." (20:72)

If there is any truth to these suggestions, then it becomes an impressive accomplishment for women to get their military jobs done in the traditional fields, let alone in combative roles.

More concrete data about men's attitudes comes from two large surveys of Army people conducted in 1974. In one, 50 to 60 percent of respondents were against women in combat, with men being more opposed than women. In the other survey, all groups (both sexes, officers, and enlisted) were asked to rate the appropriateness of 24 military jobs for women. When considering specific jobs, the respondents were a good deal more liberal, judging only the job of rifle-carrying infantry foot soldier to be inappropriate. Other jobs that involved potential danger (such as helicopter pilot, bomb disposal specialist, and military police guard duty) were judged appropriate by respondents of both sexes. (20:68)

Senior people in the defense establishment are not in agreement on the issue, as a small sampling shows. In 1972, former Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird stated, "I don't see there shouldn't be a woman fighter pilot." The next year, the Commander of Strategic Air Command, General John Meyer agreed when he said, ". . . I cannot see any reason why some

women can't be first-rate fighter pilots." (7:66) In 1978, retired Lieutenant General Ira Eaker wrote that he favored ending the congressional ban on combat and allowing service secretaries to decide how women would be utilized. The air power pioneer favored more common sense thinking on the subject:

"Much of the emotion. . . flows from an old-fashioned idea of what 'combat' is. Too frequently it draws the picture of women in fox holes or trenches or crewing a battle tank. . . . In my infantry company 60 years ago the men selected to carry the machine guns, mortars and ammunition were the six-foot, 200-pounders, not the lightweights. . . . Common sense will prevail in future personnel assignments as it always has." (7:17)

But there is no unanimity on this subject between military men. Retired Army General William Westmoreland has expressed his opposition to women in combat:

"I'm for women in the military services. They can do most jobs as well as, some of them better, than men and they're doing it right now. But I don't believe that we have such a shortage of quality among our men that we have to force women to do the jobs that men have traditionally done throughout history." (20:67)

In April 1986, former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger took the same approach against women in combat, saying "I think. . . women are too valuable to be sent into combat." (8:30) In 1987, James H. Webb Jr. reaffirmed his strong belief that women should not be allowed to fight during Senate confirmation hearings on his nomination as Secretary of the Navy. (9:12)

Younger military men are similarly divided in



opinion. One young woman cadet at the Air Force Academy said that male cadets tell her, "I really think you should fly fighters, but it would be difficult to have you on my wing 'cause I'd want to protect you." (10:2A)

A male 1977 Air Force Academy graduate remembered that acceptance of women was an evolutionary process:

"I noticed that women were getting rougher treatment, mentally, being pushed harder academically, particularly by upper classmen who didn't want them there. They (cadets) got used to the fact that standards and grades were not lowered as a concession to women, that attrition rates for the women were the same as for the men and if they (women) couldn't hack it, they got out." (11:38)

Although young men clearly have widely different views, this observation does suggest that perhaps, over time, women who carry their share of the load seem able to win a measure of male acceptance in unconventional settings. Whether or not this acceptance would carry over into a combat situation remains to be seen. In the years to come, it is conceivable that military men who have the opportunity to work with greater numbers of military women in non-traditional settings, may begin to view the idea of women in combat as a practical necessity.

Two recent studies of mixed-gender field deployments are of interest in this regard. Although findings are the subjective observations of sociologists and therefore not conclusive, the trends are noteworthy.

In the first study, sociologist M.C. Devilbiss deployed with US armed forces on a 2-week Joint Chief of

Staff exercise in 1982. Ten percent of the 200-member radar squadron under observation were females, who lived and worked round the clock under the same austere conditions as the men. Devilbiss studied the situation to see how women reacted to the hostile combat-simulated environment and concluded that "individual rather than gender-related differences seemed to be the crucial explanatory variables" in determining who could "take it." (12:537)

The researcher also explored how women affected the unit's combat readiness, noting that different norms began to emerge wherein gender gradually became less important: "Notably, intragender assistance was requested and given by both women and men." (12:538)

The research also shed some new light on the "male bonding" phenomena, noting that non-romantic male-female "buddy relationships" developed in the field that strongly resembled the bonding process:

It is very possible that the bonding (linkages or ties) that may have been seen previously as resulting from commonality of gender may in fact have resulted from commonality of experience in what have historically happened to be gender-exclusive groups. (12:540-541)

The study concluded that the presence of women on this exercise was a positive factor that enhanced combat readiness. Another sociologist, Charles C. Moskos, drew many of the same types of conclusions in his 1984 study of 50 women and 650 men deployed for 179 days in austere, hot

conditions in Honduras.

Moskos found the morale among both sexes to be "remarkably high," considering the "spartan living conditions and arduous work." He too noted gradual changes in attitudes on the part of both sexes--each giving way a bit to find an acceptable middle ground. He noticed that women assigned to heavy labor career fields actually performed those duties, and that women pulled the unsavory details, "proportionate to their numbers, as often as the men." (13:30)

Moskos, like Devilbiss, cautiously concluded that "women soldiers, under certain conditions, do much better in nontraditional military roles than most men think." (13:33)

While these field studies by no means prove that women would be effective in combat, they do add substance to the suggestion that the next generation of American men may view the subject of American women in combat from a very different and entirely new perspective.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis has shown how Air Force policy has responded to a wide variety of influences. It has also explored a broad range of historical and sociological trends, and presented arguments which are a part of the dialogue on the "women in combat" issue. It was not the purpose of this paper to resolve this issue--that is clearly a decision which rests with the American people and their elected representatives. Rather, it was to look in great depth at the Air Force policy regarding combat exclusions for women and to develop recommendations about whether the policy should be continued, modified or cancelled. Since Air Force policy on this issue implements public law, we first present our conclusions on the prospects for a change in the law; this is followed by our conclusions and recommendations for Air Force policymakers.

#### The Law: Prospects for Change

We find no overwhelming evidence to substantiate that the American people have convinced their elected representatives that they wish to send women into direct combat. But clearly American society is changing with regard to women's "proper" roles. Years ago, little attention was paid, for example, to women's sports. Today it is different: younger women are being trained psychologically to compete,

and are now participating in all aspects of society, and functioning in many nontraditional roles. The Women's Rights Movement of the seventies caused the issue of women in combat to be raised in many forums. Particularly noteworthy were the Congressional debates and hearings and Supreme Court decisions surrounding the Equal Rights Amendment, the All-Volunteer Force, the resumption of draft registration, and women's equal opportunity challenges. As a result, Air Force interpretation of the "intent" of the law became more liberal and women have been integrated throughout the force. It's important to note, however, that as the interpretation of the exclusion statutes changed, the statutes remain on the books and have never been directly challenged in the courts.

Will Congress repeal or significantly modify the combat exclusion laws in the near future? We think not. This law is rooted deeply in cultural beliefs and moral attitudes that are the result of historical experience and national and religious tradition. The exclusion law is supported by a great deal of inertia, and Congress is not likely to take on the "moral majority" as long as they have lingering questions about the impact that women in combat roles might have on combat effectiveness and the nation's credible deterrence--the risk of error is too great.

The variety of concerns which the combat issue spawns are, in large measure, irreconcilable differences

that no amount of logic or debate can resolve to the satisfaction of all. Congress has been supported by the nation's courts in its determination that national defense takes precedence over women's equality, and there is no reason to believe that this support will erode. While current data are accumulating that suggests women might be combat-worthy, the absence of a history where women have regularly participated in combat leaves the entire question open to a nagging and frustrating uncertainty about the impact their inclusion into combat units might have on combat effectiveness.

Closely related is the longstanding worry about how the use of American women in combat roles would be perceived by allies and potential enemies. Worst case is that such use would be interpreted as a weakening of our forces since women have traditionally been viewed as noncombatants all over the world. The best case is that this trend would ultimately be viewed as having actually enhanced our military forces. Presently, it seems more likely to conclude that infusing large numbers of women into combat roles would be generally--albeit cautiously--viewed by allies and adversaries as a weakening of our military effectiveness.

On the other hand, there are pressures for change. Advocates for women in combat roles point out that modern warfare is fought with high-technology weapons on a battlefield where the front may be ill-defined due to weapon capabilities and deep-strike doctrine. Clearly the once

clear distinction between combat and non-combat roles has become blurred. But opponents claim that war will always be physical, dirty and horrible so long as the objective is to kill the enemy. Virtually no one is arguing these days that the combat exclusion law protects women from danger. In fact, there seems to be a trend in public opinion towards opening certain "high-technology" combat jobs (for example, fighter pilots) that are perceived to be different somehow from direct hand-to-hand combat. We believe that Congress will not make selective exemptions to the exclusion law because of their historical difficulties in defining combat --it's an all or nothing proposition.

The more liberal interpretations of the 40-year old law have placed women in more dangerous positions with regard to combat exposure. This could provide the catalyst for additional pressures to remove the exclusion statutes since the statutes could be perceived as ineffectual except in terms of their negative impact on women's careers. Given America's emphasis on individual rights and freedoms, arguments for qualified women volunteers--already exposed to combat risks--to be recognized as equal partners with their male counterparts could be more convincing and powerful than some would anticipate. However, to bring about that change would require a sponsored move against existing statutes--a move which would probably be viewed as politically unattractive for some time to come. Regardless

of how strongly they might favor a change, legislators would probably continue to be reluctant to arouse America's silent majority by tampering directly with the combat exclusion laws. We have seen that reflected in the 1987 legislative proposals, where the issue was addressed in terms of ensuring equal opportunity, but combat exclusion was never directly challenged.

In conclusion, we predict that the conservative forces at work on this issue are sufficient to influence Congress not to repeal or change existing laws excluding women from combat roles in the foreseeable future. However, the services should reasonably expect and anticipate considerable Congressional encouragement to "work around" existing statutes in utilizing women to the fullest extent possible.

Air Force Policy: Does it Need to Change?

The Air Force's stance with regard to use of women in combat roles has evolved gradually, with the greatest changes having occurred over the last 15 years. The trend throughout that time frame has been to increasingly liberalize policies on utilization of women--either as a result of Service manpower needs, at Congressional or Department of Defense urging, or in response to the demands of women seeking more significant roles.

At this stage, the Air Force must respond to the Secretary of Defense's recent (February 1988) guidance and apply the new "risk rule" test to a variety of jobs which



have, until now, been closed to women. Early estimates predict that this exercise could open as many as 2,000 aircrew jobs to women. Having accomplished this, the Air Force will be nearing the saturation point on the number of jobs that could be opened without a change in the law. Therefore, we see no need or possibility for additional changes to Air Force policy.

In the event the US Congress takes action to change the provisions of Title 10 to permit women to participate in combat (and we do not foresee such action in the near future), we do not anticipate that Air Force policy would need to undergo monumental revision in order to officially accommodate "women warriors" into critical war-fighting jobs. We do, however, caution that repeal of the exclusion statutes would not necessarily imply an automatic Air Force obligation to open all jobs to women. At that point, the burden of accurately determining total qualifications for critical war-fighting jobs would rest solely with the Air Force. In anticipation of that eventuality, the Air Force should consider long-term plans for defining these qualifications as precisely as possible.

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94. US Congress. House. Representative Dickinson introducing legislation (H.R. 2719) to increase the combat support assignments open to women. 100th Cong., 1st Sess., June 18, 1987. Congressional Record, H. 5308.